

ST. PAUL AT ATHENS.

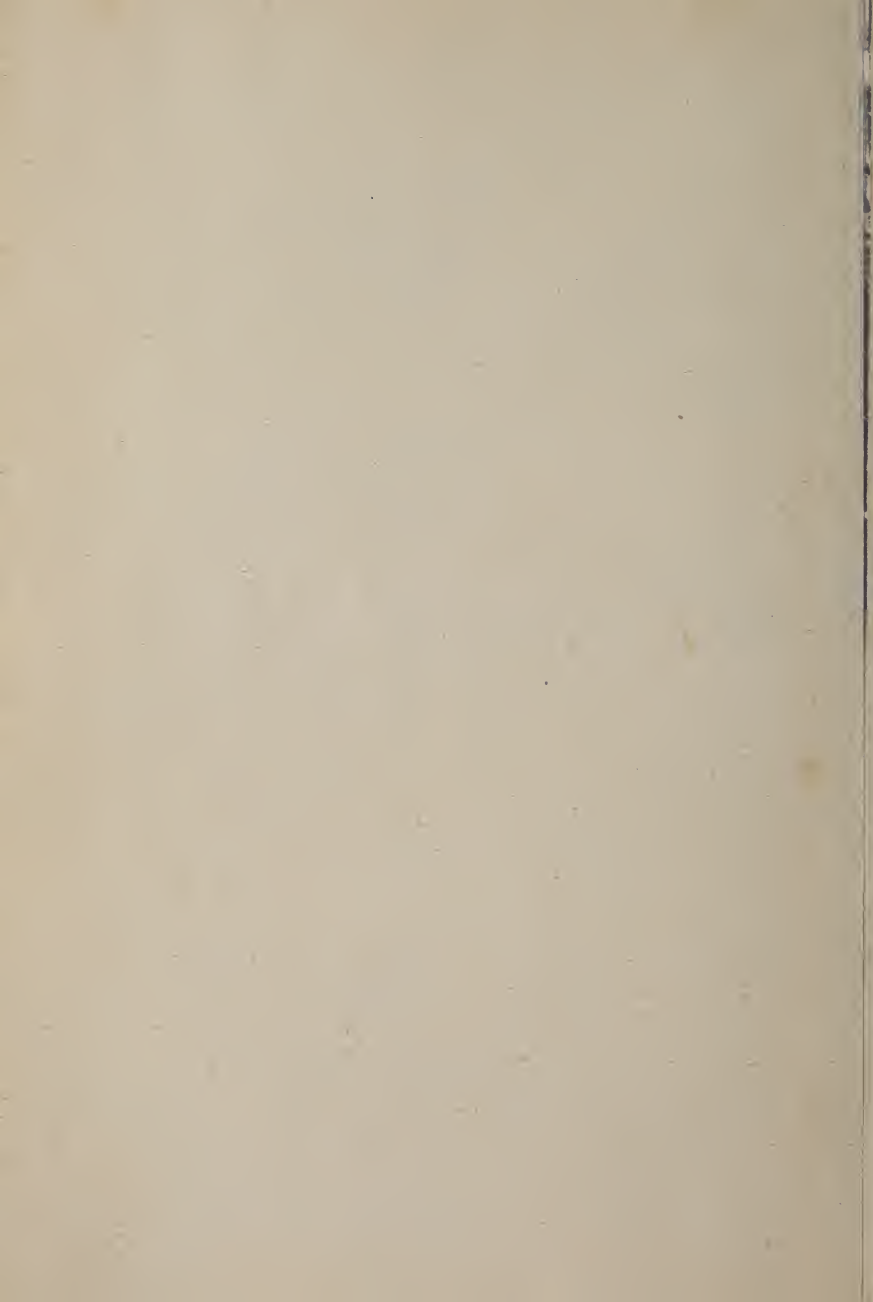
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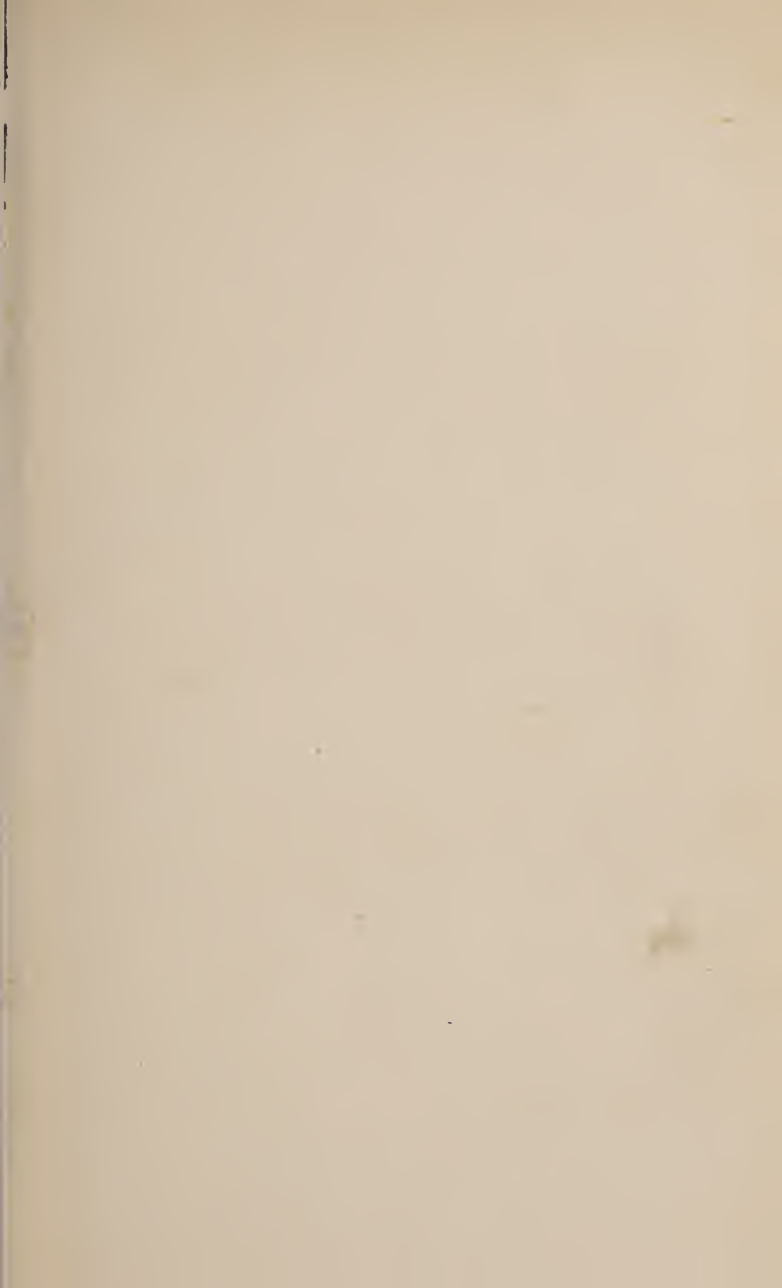
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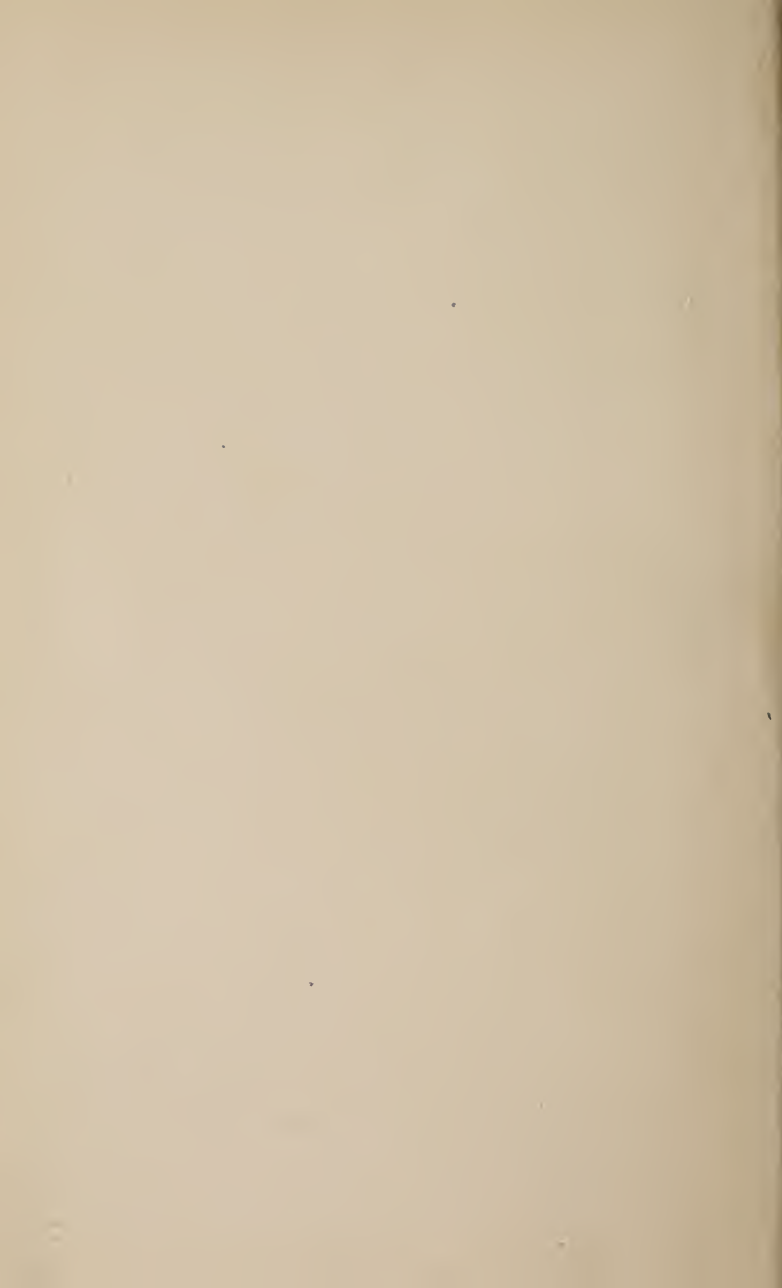
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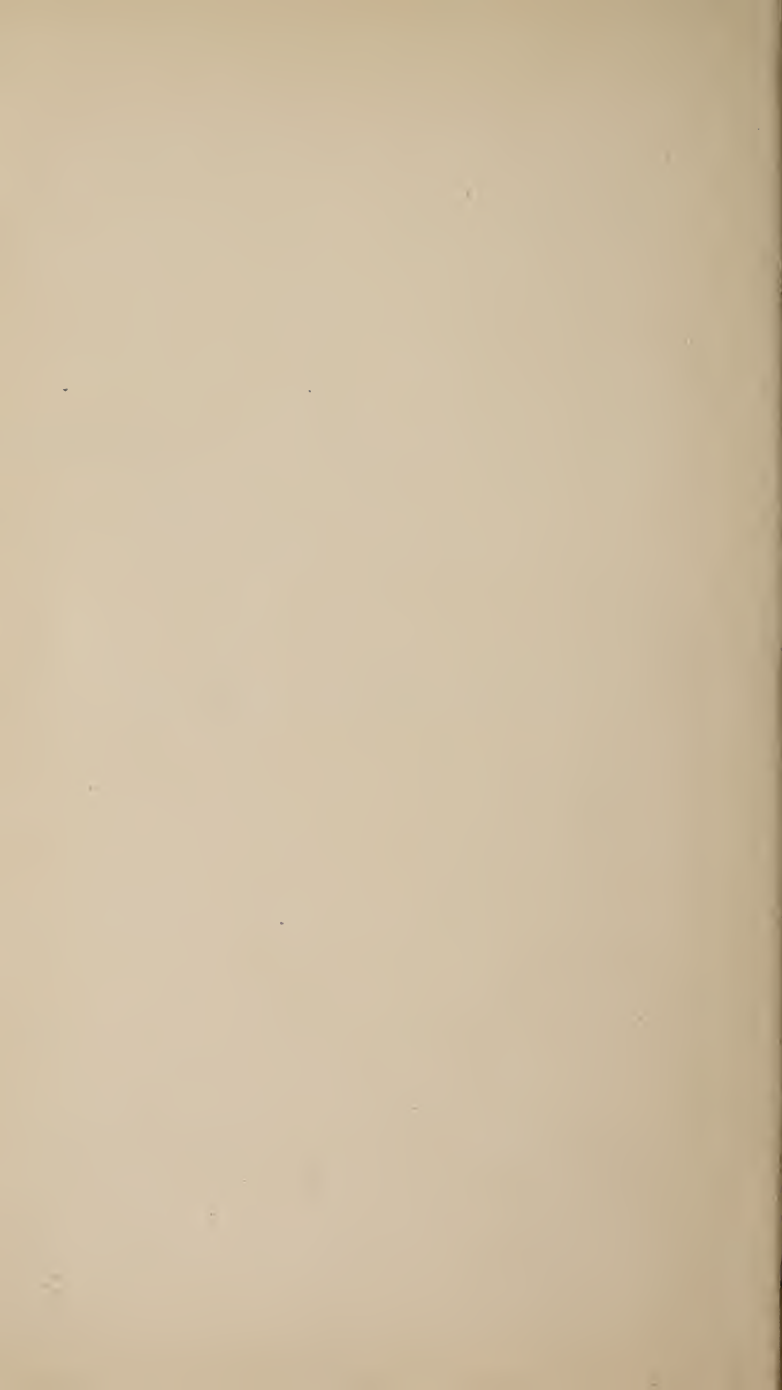
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ST. PAUL AT ATHENS.



ST. PAUL AT ATHENS:

SPIRITUAL CHRISTIANITY IN RELATION TO SOME
ASPECTS OF MODERN THOUGHT.

NINE SERMONS

PREACHED IN ST. STEPHEN'S CHURCH, WESTBOURNE PARK.

BY

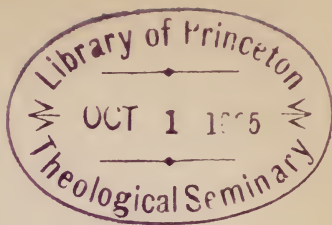
CHARLES SHAKSPEARE, B. A.

ASSISTANT CURATE.

WITH A PREFACE BY THE REV. CANON FARRAR, D.D.

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PREFACE.

A VERY few pages of the following volume will suffice to convince the thoughtful reader that Mr. Shakspeare stands in need of no other introduction than such as is furnished by his own ability and eloquence. It is not through any presumption of mine that I am induced to write these few words of preface, nor am I so vain as to suppose that the Sermons will gain in any way by my recommendation. My connection with them is simply as follows:—Having heard them very highly spoken of, and feeling a deep interest in the subject of which they treat, I obtained from Mr. Shakspeare's ready kindness the pleasure of reading them in manuscript; and when I had read them I could not but think it a great pity that discourses of such high merit, and on which so much thought and labor had been expended, should be of no advantage beyond the narrow circle of those that heard them. I therefore suggested to the author that he should publish them, and it is only in compliance with an earnest request that I take the liberty of detaining the reader from the volume itself.

One of the many advantages of the ordinance of preaching is its wonderful elasticity; the great variety of subjects which sermons may embrace, and the wide diversities of treatment which they permit. It is obvious that the following Sermons would be ill-adapted to a miscellaneous and uneducated congregation; but they were found to be deeply interesting and extremely useful to the comparatively small but highly cultivated audience to which they were addressed. Those who have watched the current of recent English literature,—those who are often thrown into the company of men of letters and men of science,—can hardly be unaware of the deep dissatisfaction with which sermons are often regarded, and of the utter scorn with which they are denounced. The reason is obvious. The many whose faith has been shaken by the contradiction between the assertions of the pulpit on the one hand, and the equally confident assertions of science and criticism on the other, and who, from the nature of the case, cannot often hear from the pulpit a single word of sympathy with them in their vague bewilderment, or a single serious attempt to overthrow, by research and reasoning, the difficulties by which they are constantly disturbed, are apt to declare that the clergy either wilfully ignore the opinions and reasonings of all but their own circles, or have nothing worth notice to offer in alleviation of their doubts. It is therefore erroneously asserted that the clergy are living by choice in a fool's paradise of assumed infallibility, and that they think to escape their adversaries by simply burying their heads in the sand. I need not say that

such complaints seem to me to be founded in misconception. It cannot, I think, be alleged with any truth that the clergy have refused to enter into the field of historic and textual criticism, or that they have omitted to show what they conceive to be the correlation between the truths of the Catholic religion and the certain discoveries of philosophy and science. And there are surely men among the ranks both of Anglican and Nonconformist divines whose wealth of knowledge, and power of intellect, and unquestioned sincerity, and frank willingness to give their reasons for the faith that is in them, are a sufficient proof that they are not likely as a body to follow the cheap and contemptible method of getting rid of all controversy by simply ignoring its existence. Yet even such thinkers as these, soon find by experience that ordinary sermons to ordinary congregations are not by any means desirable vehicles for those controversies which deal with the most fundamental verities of the Christian faith. The sceptical metaphysician, the scientific doubter, the Positivist, the Secularist, the Agnostic, should remember that the thoughts which might be well suited to meet their arguments, and that the discussion,—if not the perfect refutation,—which they have a right to demand from those to whom has been intrusted, in a more special manner the sacred deposit of Christian doctrine, would be wholly unsuited to the poor, the ignorant, the suffering, the uneducated, the dull; to those who would not even understand the technicalities of an argument; to those who have never known the agony of a doubt; to those who derive the

continuance of their spiritual life from faithful worship and the Holy Communion; to those who have found in the truths of Christianity their sole support and their sole consolation during many weary years. What to the sceptic might seem to be weighty thoughts and interesting suggestions, would sound to simple worshippers like the vain babblings of scholastic disputation. What the former might repudiate as the dogmatism of ignorance, or despise as the commonplaces of exhortation may come to the latter like the music of heaven. The former might be inclined to turn with an almost contemptuous weariness from discourses which are often to the latter the very bread of life. Even if it were right for a Christian minister to forget for a moment that the vast majority of his audience is composed of believing Christians,—even if it were right for him to trouble and becloud their minds with objections to which he himself attaches no importance, and of which they have never even heard,—yet all the conditions under which sermons are ordinarily preached in our parish churches, while most admirably adapted for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, are singularly adverse to sustained argument or intricate inquiry.

Those, therefore, who really wish to see how the clergy meet the opposition of scepticism, will find many books written with this purpose, but can hardly expect to hear sermons addressed to them on topics such as these. But, for this very reason, it is desirable that those of the clergy who have the requisite knowledge and ability should not miss the opportunity for

Christian apologetics, when it is fairly presented to them in the ordinary course of their ministry. Such was the opportunity which occurred to Mr. Shakspeare in some afternoon sermons at St. Stephen's, Westbourne Park, and which he utilised to the best of his power, by the effort to counteract—not by angry denunciation, but by thoughtful argument—the prevalent tendency to Agnosticism. It was one of his objects to endeavour to demonstrate, as Professor Max Müller has also shown in his recent Hibbert Lectures, that the elements of faith and duty, even apart from external revelation, are immanent in the consciousness of mankind; but with this difference, that Professor Max Müller was speaking in a secular place,* to a secular audience, whereas Mr. Shakspeare, preaching in the pulpit of a church, might fairly start with the assumption that those whom he was addressing were more than willing to grant far wider premises than could be assumed in an argument which was purely scientific, and in which it was necessary to prove, or at the very least to show the absolute reasonableness of, the most elementary principles of faith.

There are some so-called religious critics who—being utterly unconscious of everything that is going on in the world of secular literature—have so little either of the wisdom of the serpent, or the harmlessness of the dove, that with unreasoning fury they attack their best friends as though they were their deadliest ene-

* The Chapter House of Westminster Abbey belongs to the Government, and leave to use it has to be obtained, not from the Dean and Chapter, but from the First Commissioner of the Board of Works.

mies. To such persons a writer immediately becomes an object of suspicion if he so much as quotes a sentiment, however noble, from a known skeptic, without flinging a stone, or fulminating an anathema. To such critics a writer like Mr. Shakspeare does not appeal. To them he might fairly say—

“*Sis sus, sis divus, sum caltha et non tibi spiro.*”

The subjects with which he is dealing are far too solemn to admit of their being made turbid by the wretched pettinesses of party controversy. He well knew that those whom he wished to influence would be simply repelled by an assumed right to silence them with current conventionalities, and by the affectation either of a serene unconsciousness of their difficulties, or a pious terror of their opinions. If it be true—as is so constantly asserted and so loudly bewailed—that men of the highest intellect and the profoundest thought are getting more and more alienated from Christianity—at any rate, in the forms under which it is most often presented to them—then it is at least certain that they will never attend to any argument which shows an entire unacquaintance with their position, or with the literature in which it is set forth, and that they will never listen to any voice which does not address them in the language of manly frankness, and respectful sympathy. This is the tone of the following sermons. They are the work of one who is competent by learning and culture to deal with the subjects of which he speaks; and of one who in the fairness and moderation of his tone has tried to catch

something of the spirit of that great Apostle of whom he is writing. St. Paul at Ephesus was not a blasphemer of the goddess Artemis;* at Athens he uttered no fierce denunciation even of a decadent and despairing philosophy. He strove to overthrow the monstrous complications of Paganism, by preaching with all love and forbearance the Revelation of God in Jesus Christ; and he tried to meet the noblest instincts of the Stoic and the Epicurean, by showing them that the God who had sent him forth to preach Jesus and the Resurrection, was the Unknown God of their unsuccessful search, and of their unconscious praise. Mr. Shakspeare has the very highest authority for his fearlessness and for his sympathy; and in days when so many volumes of sermons find a favourable reception even when they are very thin in substance and unoriginal in expression, I cannot doubt that readers will be found to welcome discourses which have a special object, and which are so well adapted as these are to repay a thoughtful perusal. On whatever grounds any may object to them, no one, I think, can possibly say that they are nothing more than "another wave on the Dead Sea of Commonplace."

I will only add that I must, of course, disclaim all responsibility for special phrases and sentiments which occur in the following sermons. They contain some things with which I disagree, and many expressions which I could not myself have used. The same might probably be said by the readers of almost any religious

* Acts xix. 37.

work which showed the faintest gleam of independence and originality. On many questions, and possibly even on some points of deep importance, I differ from the author. The gratitude which I have ventured to express for the general design of the sermons, and for the way in which the design has been worked out, will not, of course, be interpreted to mean an identity of my own opinions with those of the writer, or an unqualified acceptance of all that he has said.

F. W. FARRAR.

SWANAGE, *September*, 1878.

TO
JAMES SWIFT DICKSON, ESQ.,
THE
DEAR AND BELOVED FRIEND OF YOUTH,
TO WHOSE
SYMPATHY, ENCOURAGEMENT, AND AID
IS DUE
A BOUNDLESS DEBT OF GRATITUDE AND AFFECTION,
THIS BOOK
IS DEDICATED BY
THE AUTHOR.

"O mihi præteritos referat si Jupiter annos."

—VIRGIL (*Æn.* viii. 560).

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“—— One adequate support
 For the calamities of mortal life
 Exists—one only; an assured belief
 That the procession of our fate, howe'er
 Sad or disturbed, is ordered by a Being
 Of infinite benevolence and power;
 Whose everlasting purposes embrace
 All accidents, converting them to good.”

—WORDSWORTH (*The Excursion*).

“Εἰ μοι ξυνείη φέροντι
 Μοῖρα τὰν εὖσεπτον ἀγνείαν λόγων
 Ἔργων τε πάντων, ὧν νόμοι πρόκεινται
 Ὑψίποδες, οὐρανίαν
 Δὶ αἰθέρα τεκνωθέντες, ὧν Ὀλυμπος
 Πατὴρ μόνος, οὐδέ νιν
 Θνατὰ φύσις ἀνέρων
 Ἔτικτεν. οὐδὲ μήποτε λάθρα κατακοιμάσῃ
 Μέγας ἐν τούτοις Θεὸς, οὐδὲ, γηράσκει.”

—SOPHOCLES (*Œdip. Tyrann.*, v. 863–871).

“Unsere Welt wird noch so fein werden, dass es ebenso lächerlich sein wird, einen Gott zu glauben, als heut zu Tage Gespenster.”—
 LICHTENBERG (*apud Tholuck, Die Glaubwürdigkeit der Evangelischen Geschichte*, S. 24, 25).

“There is a superstition approaching to weakness or worse in being over-afraid of superstition.”—PALGRAVE (*Hist. of Normandy and England*, i. 137).

“Opinionum enim commenta delet dies: Naturæ judicia confirmat.”—CICERO (*De Natura Deorum*, ii. 2, 5).

INTRODUCTION.

THIS course of Sermons was delivered with a view of assisting, if possible, minds perplexed by prevalent modes of agnostic thought. In every congregation of educated people there are some who have by no means thrown off their reverence for religion, but who are harassed by the schism between their intellectual attitude and their devotional feelings. In the church in which I have ministered for many years, I was well aware that there were hearers of this kind, and these sermons were an attempt to help them in their difficulties.

On mentioning to my dear friend and vicar, the Rev. T. J. Rowsell, my purpose of trying to deal with this state of mind, he not only expressed approval, but gave me his warm sympathy, and his presence at the delivery of the Sermons. I felt myself that, in a church in which two earnest pastoral discourses were preached every Sunday, it was permissible to employ the third (afternoon) service, at least occasionally, in speaking upon subjects somewhat remote from ordinary

congregational needs, yet possibly helpful to special types of mind.

The work is now published in compliance with a wish expressed by many hearers, and, in particular, at the request of my vicar, and of the Rev. Canon Farrar, who, with much kindness, has written, from his own point of view, a preface to the series.

In submitting these Discourses to the public, I must request the reader to bear in mind the special aim with which they were composed and preached. This was to suggest that the attitude of what is called Nescience towards spiritual religion can only justify itself by dropping out of sight a large class of facts exhibited in the development of our race, or by refusing to these facts what appears to me the only adequate interpretation. A striking chapter in this history is the contact of Hellenism and Christianity in the first and second centuries of our era. Greek speculation in its ethical aspects and Hebrew religiousness are both phenomena of a kind which cannot be dismissed as wholly illusory, as having no ground in ultimate reality, and no meaning beyond themselves. I wished to suggest to hearers to whom, often in their own despite, religion in this world appears a mere dream, evolved under purely human conditions by the misreading of the phenomena of nature, that such an interpretation is too narrow for the facts and too little

in harmony with the deepest roots of our own being to hold its ground. I tried to show that the Socratic and Platonic,¹ as well as the Hebrew and Christian faith requires another and a higher view of the world and of man, and that the idea of a living God would be found to harmonise, when allowance is made for the necessary limits of our faculties, with the teaching of experience, if experience be understood to include spiritual experience. I hoped that minds far from insensible to the force of religious sentiment might perceive that it was no way irrational to believe in a transcendental object of that sentiment—in an adorable Being whom it was neither superstition nor fanaticism to endeavour to make consciously, as He is really, the indwelling presence of our souls and of our lives. In a word, the fundamental idea of the Sermons is, that the very existence of the spiritual faculty in man, so persistent and so vigorous, is ground of faith in a supersensuous reality corresponding to this faculty and creating it. As we—

“ —Hear the mighty stream of tendency
Uttering, for elevation of our thought,
A clear sonorous voice,”²

¹ It is instructive to observe that Socrates and Plato are objects of the intense dislike of some modern schools of thought. See Draper, “History of Intellectual Development in Europe,” vol. i. c. v., and Robert Lewin, M.D., “Life and Mind,” pp. 5, 6, note.

² This famous phrase, “stream of tendency,” is that of Wordsworth (Excursion, Book ix.).

we find the witness for God and the justification of worship.

The nine Sermons in this volume are accordingly variations on this theme. I set out with endeavouring to show that there is no rational ground for placing the intellectual and æsthetic side of our being in antagonism with the religious side of it, and that religion, essentially spiritual in its character, though it clothes itself in form, is the soul and principle of all forms. The power of a spiritual faith in history to triumph over unbelief and superstition is illustrated by the contrast between Gentile rituals and Christian worship. The preparation for Christianity in the Roman Empire through philosophy become devout, exhibits in two distinct and independent manifestations the spiritual forces which sway the souls of men. The sixth discourse is an attempt to vindicate both the rights of inquiry and the rights of faith—in technical terms, the rights of the subject and the rights of the object; the seventh, to bring out the disastrous influence of the too self-regarding scheme of life which excludes all relation to the Infinite. The sermon on the Stoics and Modern Thought dwells upon the persistence of religious sentiments and religious ideas under unfavourable conditions, and on the testimony thus afforded to the reality from which they spring. I have, finally, summed up the case as presented in the

previous discourses, and indicated some aspects of Christianity which confirm our faith in a living Lord of all, and help us to live as seeing Him who is invisible.

The form of the sermon must, of course, render this line of thought unsystematic, and has compelled me to give a sketch, not a full exposition. But, persuaded as I am that we reach spiritual verities not through intellect only, but through conscience and affection, I shall be satisfied if I shall have induced any hearer, or if I can induce any reader, to seek the highest philosophy of life in the region of religious trusts, and, without abnegating reason, to "rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for Him."

In fact, the attempt to exclude from the sphere both of thought and conduct all regard to the Infinite, which, whether we will or not, overshadows and colours our lives, can end only in failure. Monistic schemes of philosophy are no doubt wrecked against the dualities of human existence.¹ God and man,

¹ "Il est impossible, avec un peu d'attention, de ne pas être frappé d'un phénomène que présentent uniformément la science, la vie humaine, et la société. Chacune de leurs parties, chacune de leurs manifestations met en saillie deux principes opposés et rivaux, également vrais l'un et l'autre, également impérieux, destinés, ce semble, à se limiter, à se modifier mutuellement, à produire, par leur combinaison, l'état régulier, la vérité des choses, mais ne parvenant jamais à l'accomodement désiré, et perpétuant dans les différentes sphères que nous avons indiquées ces *dualités* incurables et désespérantes qui finissent par nous sembler les conditions fatales de la pensée et de l'existence humaines."—Vinet, "Essais de Philosophie Morale," Introduction, p. ii.

Divine destination and human freedom, reign of law and providence, eternal order and prayer, perfect goodness and possibility of sin, unchanging purpose and forgiveness, cannot be grasped under one complete and consistent conception. We can conceive the Infinite in relation only to our finite consciousness. We can indeed make the Infinite a subject of thought, but we can only represent it to our minds under some image that is drawn from our finite experience. Thus, while in the realm of speculation it is permissible, and indeed inevitable, that we recognise the existence of unity as a unity which transcends all finite modes of thinking,¹ the moral and practical danger of monistic thought is the hazard of letting go our foothold on this earth in futile attempts to scale heaven. We may lose sight of the sacredness of duty, of the imperative claims of conscience, of the need of worshipping the Father of spirits, while striving vainly to grasp a conception of the Infinite Power for which we refuse to allow our sensible and spiritual experience to furnish any illustrative symbol. Conscious of the inadequacy and of the purely relative truth of all symbols, we may lose ourselves in empty space, and forget that the symbol, inadequate as it is, is truth, which is not the less real because it is relative to ourselves.

¹ See the Sermon on the Stoics and Modern Thought, p. 129.

This is not, however, the danger to which the minds of Englishmen are most exposed. The danger lies for us in the other direction—that of pronouncing the Infinite a mere chimera, because it necessarily transcends intelligence, and is not fully presentable to imagination, and so of resolutely shutting it out from all influence upon thought and life. The Positive philosophy, though originating in France, has a natural affinity for ourselves. The policy of wholly letting alone subjects which lie beyond the range of sensible observation and experiment commends itself to many of us as the height of practical wisdom. The matter-of-fact philosophy of Locke¹ contains, indeed, the germ of the system of Auguste Comte, and good upon the whole as the influence of Locke on English thought has been, that good has been counterbalanced by some evil. Certainly we shall not escape mental perplexity or practical difficulty by giving the lie direct to the sense of the Infinite which “besets us behind and before, and lays its hand upon us.” Were it possible to rid ourselves of its haunting presence, every hue of poetry, every hue of devotion, all that suffuses our being with ideal beauty, all that impels it to noble ends, would be washed out of our souls, and life would

¹ See, for example, *Human Understanding*, Book IV., cc. xviii. and xix., on “Faith and Reason” and “Enthusiasm,” where, amidst much good sense, he wholly misses the real grounds of faith and of certitude.

speedily become in theory that which, as it is, it too easily tends to become, in fact, colourless and ignoble. So far as our relation to this world of things and persons is concerned, we have to order our lives by what we know. Yet it is the light that comes from the source of all being which clothes what we know with its investiture of spiritual glory, and gives it its power over conduct. Like the peasant-poet, Clare, who in his childhood set out from his father's cottage to touch, if he might, the point where earth and sky meet, we are drawn on towards far horizons "clad in colours of the air," by the impulse and sentiment which comes from the Father of Lights.

In this series of Sermons, therefore, I have kept in view these two blended elements of our being, which we may imperfectly designate as knowledge and faith. Christianity is the recognition of both these elements. It leads us upwards from experience to that which transcends experience. In the Sermon on the Mount, for example, we have principles of conduct which are most surely verified in the experience of all who have attempted to guide their lives by them. Even what may be called the negative and temporary aspects of Christ's law of the kingdom will only disappear because their work is done, while the positive and permanent spirit which that law breathes will suffuse the world which it has regenerated with an atmo-

sphere of heaven. The realisation of the law of love would annihilate the precepts by which that realisation was attained, as the scaffolding is taken down when the building is finished. Yet all this is strictly within the limits of verifiable experience. It is not the less true that the power by which the precepts of the Sermon on the Mount translate themselves into fact comes from a source which is beyond all experience. This law of love, verifiable in experience, rests upon faith in an Infinite Father and in the life of the world to come. Experience verifies the rule; the hue of thought and tone of feeling which make the rule effective are derived from the consciousness which has risen to communion with God.

With the aim which I have thus indicated, I am compelled, of course, to pass by many veins of Christian thought which find their appropriate place in sermons addressed to belief rather than to doubt. The rich mine of doctrine and ethics contained in St. Paul's Epistles is, so far as this series of discourses is concerned, almost wholly unworked. Nor have I thought it needful to encumber the course of thought with questions of historical criticism. The date of the Acts of the Apostles—the design and purpose with which it was written—do not seriously affect my subject. The ideas contained in this masterpiece of Christian oratory (of which, however, we have probably only a sketch)—St.

Paul's speech on the Areopagus—find support in his letters.¹ Discussions, therefore, which have no direct bearing on my aim in this series I studiously avoid, whatever value they may have in their own place.

As I have wished not to distract the reader's attention from the text by crowding the margin with foot-notes, although I have not been able to exclude them entirely, it is all the more incumbent upon me to express my obligation to some of the books which have been most helpful. I can indeed profess only a limited acquaintance with the rich literature of the subject, though I have done what I could in the scanty leisure left from the exacting toil of two professions. In exegesis I have found Meyer and De Wette invaluable. In the higher criticism I owe much to Baur, "*Paulus der Apostel Jesu Christi*," Mr. Jowett's *Epistles of St. Paul*, Dr Stanley on the *Corinthians*, and Dr. Lightfoot on the *Galatians*. For historical illustration, both of thought and of event, I am greatly indebted to Dr. Merivale's "*History of the Romans under the Empire*" and his Boyle Lectures for 1864, "*The Conversion of the Roman Empire*;" to Conybeare and Howson's "*Life and Letters of St. Paul*;" to Renan, "*St. Paul*;" to Ewald, "*Geschichte des Volkes Israel*," B. vi., "*Geschichte des Apostolischen Zeitalters*;" to Grote's "*Pla-*

¹ See Renan, "*Saint Paul*," pp. 194, 195, note. On the other hand, Pfeiderer, "*Paulinism*," ii. 248, 249 (Eng. tr.).

to," and his "History of Greece," as well as to Jowett's "Dialogues of Plato;" to Havet, "Le Christianisme et ses Origines;" Aubertin, "Sénèque;" Boissier, "Le Christianisme de Sénèque" in the "Revue des Deux Mondes," prem. livr. March 1871; Denis, "Histoire des Theories et des Idées morales dans l'Antiquité." In the sixth sermon I am under special obligations to Mr. Levin's small but masterly book on the "Philosophical Writings of Cicero." I am also indebted to Mr. Ll. Davies' article on "St. Paul" in Smith's "Dictionary of the Bible," and to various articles in Herzog's "Real Encyclopädie für Protestantische Theologie und Kirche," and in Schenkel's "Bibel-Lexicon." Among books which I have read since composing the Sermons, but which came in my way too late to be of essential service, I may mention Dr. Lightfoot's "Commentary on the Epistle to the Philippians;" Dr. Farrar's "Witness of History to Christ," Hulsean Lectures for 1870; Mr. Capes' "University Life of Ancient Athens;" Baur's "Sokrates und Christus," and "Seneca und Paulus," which, buried in the "Tübinger Zeitschrift" and Hilgenfeld's "Zeitschrift," were beyond my reach until Zeller edited in a separate form "Drei Abhandlungen zur Geschichte der alten Philosophie und Ihres Verhältnisses zum Christenthum." This book of Baur's, and the excellent work of Constant Martha, "Les Moralistes sous l'Empire Romain," would have been of

the greatest assistance to me had I met with them earlier. I ought to mention that I had read Dr. Stanley's article on Socrates in the "Quarterly Review" before its re-publication in the third series of "Lectures on the Jewish Church," as well as some extracts from his contributions to the "Classical Museum," in Dr. William Smith's article "Athenæ," in the Dictionary of Classical Geography." I notice this because I find that some passages in my first sermon were coloured, even in their language, by unconscious reminiscence. But obligations of this kind I am unable to acknowledge in every case, as I cannot always recall the sources.

I may add, that I have written this introduction before seeing Dr. Farrar's preface. It is not, perhaps, necessary for me to say that his general sympathy with my aim by no means implies entire approval on his part either of my method of treatment or of particular sentiments, for which I am myself exclusively responsible.

4 ST. STEPHEN'S ROAD,
WESTBOURNE PARK.

I.

THE CITY AND THE APOSTLE.

“Divine and human influences are so twisted and knit together that it is hard to sever them.”—BARROW (*Works*, i. 102).

“Ἐν ταῖσιν ἰοστεφάνοις οἰκεῖ ταῖς ἀρχαίαισιν
Ἀθήναις.”

—ARISTOPHANES (*Equit.* v. 1323).

“Ἐρεχθεῖδαι τὸ παλαιὸν ὄλβιοι,
Καὶ θεῶν παῖδες μακάρων, ἱερᾶς
Χώρας ἀπορθήτον τ’ ἀποφερβόμενοι
Κλεινοτάταν σοφίαν, ἀεὶ διὰ λαμπροτάτω
Βαίνοντες ἀβρῶς αἰθέρος, ἔνθα ποθ’ ἀγνᾶς
Ἐννέα Πιερίδας Μούσας λέγουσι
Ξανθὰν Ἀρμονίαν φυτεῦσαι.”

—EURIPIDES (*Med.* v. 824–834).

“Unde humanitas, doctrina, religio, fruges, jura, leges, artes in omnes terras distributæ putantur.” — CICERO (*Orat. pro Flacco*, xxvi. 62).

“Εἰ τις δοκεῖ ἄλλος πεποιθέναι ἐν σαρκί, ἐγὼ μᾶλλον· Περιτομὴ ὁκ-
ταήμερος, ἐκ γένους Ἰσραὴλ, φυλῆς Βενιαμίν, Ἑβραῖος ἐξ Ἑβραίων, κατὰ
νόμον Φαρισαῖος, κατα ζῆλον διώκων τὴν ἐκκλησίαν, κατὰ δικαιοσύνην
τὴν ἐν νόμῳ γενόμενος ἄμεμπτος. Ἀλλ’ ἅτινα ἦν μοι κέρδη, ταῦτα
ἤγημαι διὰ τὸν Χριστὸν ζημίαν.”—ST. PAUL (*Ep. ad Philip.*, iii. 4–7).

I.

“ And they that conducted Paul brought him unto Athens.”

ACTS xvii. 15.

THE resolution of St. Paul to preach the Gospel in Europe—one of those sudden inspirations which outstrip with the insight of intuition the slower processes of the understanding—was perhaps the boldest and the most momentous step ever taken in the spiritual history of mankind. It was a step from which an enthusiasm less ardent and a purpose less steadfast than his might well have shrunk, for it was nothing less than the attempt to overthrow, by the simple power of an appeal to the human heart and conscience, the religions of the civilisations of Greece and Rome—religions rooted in the traditions and entwined with the national life of six centuries of actual history, and beyond that, again, resting on the background of an immemorial past. It was an attempt which might well have seemed certain of failure, and yet it was a success.

It was St. Paul's second missionary tour, in the year of our Lord 51. From Alexandria Troas, where the

thoughts which possessed him had shaped themselves into the vision of a man of the West stretching forth "lame hands of faith" towards the East for spiritual succour, every stage of his progress towards Athens and Corinth was "haunted, holy ground," planted with the mightiest memories of the past. Behind him was the plain of the Troad, consecrated by "the tale of Troy divine," bright with the fame of Homer and of Alexander, and associated with the legendary origin of Rome. He sailed past Samothrace, the holy isle of worships and mysteries lost in hoar antiquity. Upon the horizon rose Athos, with crowding memories of the might of Persia wrecked against the heroic resistance of free Hellas. Landing near the famous battlefield of Philippi, where the deathblow was given to the Roman Commonwealth—the battlefield which the genius of the greatest of English poets has made classic ground to Englishmen—he passed through Amphipolis, once the brightest jewel in the crown of imperial Athens; through Thessalonica and Beræa, monuments of the vanished empire of Alexander; then onward by sea past "the snowy top of cold Olympus," home of the gods of Greece; past the peak of Ossa and the swelling ridge of Pelion, until, leaving in the distance on his right hand Thermopylæ and Marathon, he reached Athens, came through dismantled Piræus, by the ruins of the long walls, to the noblest city of the

ancient world, the centre of Hellenic culture, the university of the West.

It was a strange meeting this—the meeting of such a city and of such a man, both so great in their own order, and yet that order so diverse and so apparently antagonistic. Athens was not then, at the time of St. Paul's visit, what she had been in the past, and yet the life of the past quickened her, the beauty of the past clothed her still. The words with which the Apostle began his discourse on the Areopagus, "Ye men of Athens," fall upon our ears with a strangely familiar sound. They awaken the memories of her bygone days—of "the high actions and of the high passions" of which she was the scene. They take us back in thought to those "famous orators" in the period of her freedom and of her greatness—

"——Whose resistless eloquence
Wielded at will that fierce democracy,
Shook the arsenal, and fulminated over Greece
To Macedon and Artaxerxes' throne."

We see the city of the vanished ages pass as in a bright panorama before us. We see rising out of the abyss—

"—— Her men of might, her grand in soul:
Gone, glimmering through the dream of things that were,
First in the race that led to glory's goal,
They won and passed away."

We see once more the day when the barbarian ranks went down before the levelled spears of the soldiers of Marathon, or the day when off her shores her sons sank the Persian armada in the waters of Salamis. We behold rising under the statesmanship of Pericles and the genius of Pheidias the temples and statues which clothed her with her imperial mantle: we watch her festal multitudes thronging to her theatre to listen to strains of immortal poetry, or the angry crowds, chafing under the restraint of inaction, gathering in her streets, as men beheld from her walls their villas and homesteads wrapped in flames by the Peloponnesian invader. There rise before us the scenes of that terrible plague when doorways and temple steps and fountains were choked with corpses and her great statesman broke into a passion of tears as he placed the funeral chaplet on the dead face of his last son. We picture to ourselves the anguish and terror which smote every bosom when the tidings came that her generals and armies were lost, and her ships sunk in the harbour of Syracuse: we realise the silent despair which fell like death upon her when the news reached her that her last fleet was in the hands of Lysander, and that she was at the mercy of her enemies: or we imagine to ourselves that other day—precursor of “that dishonest victory” which laid Hellas prostrate at the feet of Macedon—the day when Athens heard

that Philip was on his march to Attica; and we see her citizens firing the booths in the market-place to make speedy room for almost the last free assembly that ever met within her walls. And the vision of all that greatness touches us with a sense of pain as we think how shortlived it was.

For all was now gone when St. Paul stood or walked in the streets where Socrates had so often gathered around him the tanners and smiths and drovers, who laughed at his homely jests, or were thrilled by the magic of his matchless speech. All that glorious past was gone — fleets and armies, imperial supremacy, political freedom — all were gone. Her long walls were sinking slowly into ruins. Piræus was dismantled, and St. Paul landed where only a few mean houses clustered around a solitary temple. The Athens of the past was no more. Overshadowing alike the Greek and the Latin world was the imperial despotism of Rome.

Well, all this was gone—but national life dies hard, and something was left still. Still—

“—— On the Ægean shore a city stands—
Built nobly, pure the air, and light the soil—
Athens, the eye of Greece, mother of arts
And eloquence, native to famous wits,
Or hospitable in her sweet recess,
City or suburban, studious walks and shades.”

Still was she in the days of St. Paul, as in those of

Aristophanes, "the bright, the violet-crowned city." Still, as in the days of Euripides, her citizens "were ever delicately marching through the most pellucid air." Still "were her skies as blue, her crags as wild." The glory of her sunsets still bathed in a flood of fire, of purple and of gold, her marble columns, her investiture of mountains, and her sea. Still was the too dazzling whiteness of her limestone rocks shaded by her wide-spreading plane-trees. Her temples were yet, for the most part, untouched by the hand of the spoiler or by the effacing finger of Time. Nero had not yet robbed Greece of its masterpieces of art. The Parthenon still stood upon the Acropolis without rent or stain, and the Athena of Pheidias still glittered in ivory and gold,¹ as the tutelary goddess who watched over the city. Here the schools of philosophy had their seat—

"—— The olive grove of Academe,
Plato's retirement, where the Attic bird
Trilled her thick-warbled notes the summer long,"—

Lyceum, and "the painted Stoa," and the garden of Epicurus; and all "the eloquent air burned and breathed" with the accents of wisdom. A fallen city she was, but a city glorious in her fall—a museum, a sanctuary, a university—redeemed by her intellectual

¹ Gilding, however, had replaced the inlaid gold.—"Dict. of Class. Biog.," s. v. "Pheidias," iii. 251.

force from her political nullity—looked up to with reverence by her former rivals, Sparta and Thebes, involved with her in the common doom of foreign conquest. Here Cicero had studied and Atticus lived. Hither came the young Roman nobility in search of culture or of pleasure. Strangers, drawn by “the remnants of her splendour past,” as well as by her present influence, thronged her streets, “and spent their time in nothing else, but either to tell or to hear some new thing,”—“the true character,” as Hobbes drily remarks, “of politicians without employment.” The last scandalous story from Rome, or the latest phase of philosophy, nothing came amiss. A bright, pleasant, garrulous city was Athens in these days of St. Paul, where seekers for truth and lovers of wisdom jostled men of wit and fashion—where the sceptic and the devotee, the frivolous and the earnest, gazed on the same bright spectacle of festive rites and gay processions—where keen intellects were asking what is truth, and aching hearts were yearning for an unknown God.

To such a city came St. Paul. He, too, has a history, and stands there, in the market-place and the Areopagus, the heir of past ages, gathering up in his own soul the spiritual experiences of a race and country which were separated from Athens and the Athenian by “an interval which no geometry can express.” He is the inheritor of that Hebrew faith in the One Living

God, the Lord of heaven and earth, which had grown up and become firmly rooted in Palestine, only after ages of conflict with sun-worships, with dark idolatries of Molech, and Ashera, and Baal, with sensual orgies and sanguinary devilries. But the battle of monotheism in Judæa had been fought and won. For the possession of that faith in the One God St. Paul has needed to pass through, in his own person, no mental conflict. He owed it to the men who had gone before him—to prophets who had witnessed and died for it when Israel inflamed himself under every green tree, and Judah filled the land with pollution and with blood—to priests and scribes who taught it in synagogue, and school, and book—to the Maccabees, who rescued the nation from the power of Greek idolatry. Into the inheritance of the spiritual fruits of all these past labours St. Paul entered; and just as, in the Hellenic world, Socrates prepared the way for Christianity by the stimulus which he gave to the religious and ethical self-consciousness,¹ so on Hebrew soil the work of the prophets was the necessary preparation for St. Paul.

But St. Paul, too, had his own personal discipline—must be baptized with the baptism with which his Master had been baptized before he could do his

¹ See Baur, "*Sokrates und Christus, Abhandlungen*," s. 247, *et seq.*

Master's work in the world. Through "great searchings of heart" must he pass before he could preach the unity of God in that Pagan city. Truly has it been said that every man who strives to learn for himself finds that his hardest task lies, not in what he has to learn, but in what he has to unlearn. And it was so with St. Paul. According to the strictest sect of his religion, he had lived a Pharisee. His mind—naturally ardent, enthusiastic, impatient of trammels, on which, in Tarsus, some chance seeds of Greek culture had fallen, who had been unconsciously influenced, too, by the more mild and tolerant principles of Gamaliel, and all these things were in secret preparing him for his future work—had yet been swathed in the bands of Rabbinical formalism. He seemed to have to unlearn all that he had held as most indubitable and most sacred when he gave up Gamaliel for Jesus and began to preach the faith which he had striven to destroy. Yet this was but a single step in his fresh spiritual career. It was not long before he saw with clearer insight than the Church of Jerusalem, or than even the twelve saw, the true spirit and genius, the real tendencies of the new faith. As the vision of the Man of Nazareth, crowned with thorns and pierced by the nails of the cross, entered into his soul, the scales fell from his eyes, and he felt rather than reasoned that this trust and love to-

wards the Invisible Father of all, which the Christ had taught him, in truth swept aside all Hebrew nationality, all sacredness of outward rites. And at this period, when he was preaching Christ in Philippi, in Thessalonica, in Beræa, and in Athens, Christianity had already entered on its second phase, was passing from the condition of a Jewish sect into a Church, catholic in the best sense of the term,—into a world-wide religion. Much had the Apostle yet to learn, much yet to unlearn; but one thing he had grasped, the very life and centre of all his teaching—the universality of the faith of Christ, recognising no distinction between Jew or Gentile, Greek or barbarian, bond or free, male or female, and breaking down the middle wall of partition between the different sections of mankind by the rushing tide of an all-comprehending creed of heart and conscience, of trust and love. This creed Paul preached in Athens—a creed broader than Hebrew faiths or than Greek philosophies—a universal Father, a Divine life of filial offering and brotherly love, such as the world had never seen or Jew or Greek known.

And thus the city and the Apostle met—the glory of human culture, and the enthusiasm of Divine faith. Many lessons touching the thought and life of our own day, suggested by this singular contrast, I propose to draw out, to the best of my power, in succeeding sermons.

One only, in conclusion, will I now note. It is this: God has a place and work in the world for Athens as well as for St. Paul, for St. Paul as well as for Athens. It did not seem so then; there are some, on either side, who do not believe it now: it is true notwithstanding. Neither the Athenian philosopher nor the Jewish apostle understood it, and yet it has come to pass. Alike for the influence of the city in which Pericles ruled, in which Socrates lived and died, and for the influence of the preacher of His Christ has God made room in His own world. Very strange to each other were the Athenian and St. Paul. "What will this babbler say?"—this Jew with his foreign garb, with his quaint language and his uncouth accent, retailing to us scraps of knowledge picked up here and there, which he evidently does not understand,—this eager disputant, who talks in the market-place like another Socrates, and, like Socrates, "seemeth to be a setter forth of strange gods." What does it all mean? The apostle, too, could even *he* understand Athens? Marvelling at the idolatry around him, he saw, in the tumult of his spirit, little more than the idolatry. What Athenian listening in that crowd could dream that the day would come when the creed preached by St. Paul would dethrone the goddess of the Parthenon and the lords of Olympus, close the schools of philosophy, seat itself in the palace of the

Cæsars, transmute the temple of the virgin goddess into the church of the Virgin Mother, and create a new civilisation out of the ruins of the old? But neither did St. Paul foresee, when he looked upon the city wholly given up to idolatry, that the spirit of Socrates, of Plato, and of Aristotle,—names of which he had probably just heard and no more,—would hereafter profoundly penetrate the theology of the Church, and mould and tincture the Christendom of the future. “Greece,” it has been said, “arose from the dead with the New Testament in her hand,”¹ and, I may add, has leavened with her culture, her art, her subtle intellectual force, the world which the New Testament has created. Ah, yes! God’s thoughts are not our thoughts, nor our ways His. Athens and St. Paul alike saw but a little way into the future; both being dead yet speak. As God lifts His world age by age to higher and nobler levels, He brings from the east and from the west, from the north and from the south, men who sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in His kingdom, and who are helping to make one bright and perfect thing out of the sundered elements of human life.

¹Goldwin Smith.

II.

CULTURE AND FAITH.

“Ἀδελφοί, μὴ παιδία γίνεσθε ταῖς φρεσίν· ἀλλὰ τῇ κακίᾳ νηπιάζετε, ταῖς δὲ φρεσὶ τέλειοι γίνεσθε.”—ST. PAUL (1 *Ep. ad Corinth.* xiv. 20).

“There have been attempts in all ages to separate Christianity from Judaism and Hellenism; but to carry out such an attempt is not to interpret Christianity, but to construct a new religion. Christianity has not only affinities with Judaism and Hellenism, but it includes in itself all the permanent truths to which both witness.”—WESTCOTT (*The Gospel of the Resurrection*, pp. 60, 61).

“When Providence would make a revelation, He does not begin anew, but uses the existing system; He does not visibly send an angel, but He commissions or inspires one of our own fellows. When He would bless us, He makes a man His priest. When He would consecrate or quicken us, He takes the elements of this world as the means of real but unseen spiritual influences.”—JOHN HENRY NEWMAN (*Essays, Critical and Historical*, ii. 194).

“Γίνεσθε οὖν φρόνιμοι ὡς οἱ ὄφεις, καὶ ἀκέραιοι ὡς αἱ περιστεραί.”—WORDS OF THE LORD (*Matt.* x. 16).

“He that useth his reason doth acknowledge God.”—WHICHCOTE (*Aphorisms*).

II.

“Now while Paul waited for them at Athens, his spirit was stirred in him when he saw the city wholly given to idolatry.”—
ACTS xvii. 16.

ALL who have read Edmund Burke's magnificent eulogy of John Howard will remember that Howard could find himself in Rome and yet never visit the Coliseum or the galleries of art. He was so absorbed by the enthusiasm of humanity, that the one purpose of his life left neither place nor leisure for any other. A similar enthusiasm stirred the spirit of St. Paul when he “thought it good to be left at Athens alone.” If we read the Epistles to the Thessalonians—the earliest books of the New Testament, written in the year of our Lord 52, about a twelvemonth after the Apostle's brief sojourn in Athens—we shall find not a single syllable to indicate that the brilliant spectacle on which he had gazed had moved him to any other feeling than pity for idolatry; we shall find not a word about the Parthenon—not a word about the Painted Porch or the schools of philosophy. What we do find is a heart glowing with devotion to the

cause to which he had consecrated his life, and yearning with the intensest affection and sympathy for the converts whom he had made. It seems as though there were no chord in his nature that responded with any thrill of emotion to the touch of Hellenic culture. His whole soul was absorbed by a passion of religious faith.

Now, my brethren, there is much here that requires careful discrimination, if we are to gather any real guidance for the present from the spiritual lessons of the past. The advocates of a religion exclusively biblical will see in the Apostle's indifference to Hellenic culture, another ray of glory in his crown of righteousness. The advocates of a purely humanitarian development will scorn the man who could look upon the Acropolis unmoved by the spirit of beauty with which its very atmosphere was filled. Would it not, perhaps, be better, before we either praise or condemn St. Paul, to try to understand him? What John Foster has said of Howard may be said with at least equal truth of St. Paul—"Mere men of taste ought to be silent respecting such a man as Howard; he is above their sphere of judgment." But neither is the religious man right who thinks to justify his scorn of culture by the example, as he deems it, of St. Paul. We must look at this matter historically if we wish to understand the Apostle and his relation to the world of Gentile thought and life.

We must remember, then, that St. Paul was a Jew. His whole life recoiled from idolatry, and with idolatry every graven image, every sculptured form in Athens was indissolubly entwined. Nothing in his previous mental history had prepared him to feel as *we* feel in the presence of the monuments of that marvellous past; everything, on the contrary, tended to call off his mind from the beauty around him to fix it on the sin. He would have been false to his holiest convictions, untrue to his own innermost nature, if this likening of the Godhead "to gold or silver or stone, graven by art and man's device," although the hand of Pheidias or Praxiteles had graven them, had not fired his soul with a glow of indignation which counteracted the spell of beauty. Of the history of Athens in the days of her glory he knew but little. The great names of the Greek and Roman past, of the warriors and legislators, of the poets and philosophers, who had built up that splendid civilisation, were to him but as shadows. His chief associations with Hellenic history and with Hellenic art were solely connected with the heroic resistance of his own countrymen to the attempt of Antiochus Epiphanes to introduce idolatry into Judæa. He belonged to another world, Jewish not Greek; and in the depth and intensity of the moral earnestness which sent him forth to preach Christ to the Gentiles, he could see but obstacles to the

Divine kingdom on earth in the fairest creations of genius.

All this is natural and intelligible. This man was God's instrument for a special work, and his very defects on the side of culture were, under the actual circumstances, as essential for the fulfilment of that work as his impassioned faith and his untiring devotion. But it is a very different thing when the point of view is shifted from the historical estimate of the man to that of a blind slavery to the letter, which perverts the noble life and character of the Apostle to justify a sweeping condemnation of culture. When it is said, St. Paul cared not for the splendours of art or for the wisdom of the philosophers, why then should we? I protest against the idolatry of the letter and the estimate of the man. No; St. Paul was not in conscious sympathy with classic art or with classic philosophy. He could not have been in sympathy with them without ceasing to be St. Paul. The home of his spirit was not in Athens or in Rome. His citizenship was in heaven, from whence he looked for his Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ.

All this I grant. I grant that the spiritual faiths which had struck their roots so deeply in his soul partially narrowed the range of his intellect. Not the less certain is it that there were elements in his nature, and that there are indications in his teaching, which

put to shame the ignorance or the fanaticism which decries culture. Nowhere shall we find side by side with such depth and earnestness of religious conviction a more tolerant and candid spirit than is displayed in this speech on the Areopagus. With a breadth of view very remarkable in the man who describes himself as "an Hebrew of the Hebrews, as touching the law a Pharisee," we see him finding under the forms of Athenian worship a hidden faith in the One Lord of heaven and earth, recognising the unity of all the families of mankind, beholding in the blind gropings of these men of Athens after the Invisible and the Divine the presence and inspiration of the God in whom we live and move and have our being. The man who, amidst all the unutterable pollutions of Roman paganism, could look below the surface and discern there "the Gentiles, who, having not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law," had little in common with the intolerance of the zealot; nor was that man an enemy of culture who wrote, "Whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report: if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things."

We do not, however, live in St. Paul's age, but in our own, and the reconciliation between culture and faith ought not to be impossible after eighteen centuries

of Christianity. It is sad that we should have to say so—but the truth must be spoken; culture and faith are even yet not fully reconciled. A large—but also I think a lessening—portion of what is distinctively called the religious world looks askance at culture—sees evil in the fearless exercise of the reason, and finds the trail of the serpent in the sense of beauty. On the other hand, the world of literature and the world of science manifests—sometimes by its silence, sometimes by open avowal—its distrust, even its dislike, of what is comprehended under the name of faith.

It is scarcely half a century ago that a Nonconformist, possessed of much intellectual force and insight, wrote an essay “On the Aversion of Men of Taste to Evangelical Religion,” and in our day the distinguished son of a distinguished father has felt it his duty to plead the cause of culture, in other words, of enlightenment, of intelligence, of mental breadth, of openness to all impressions of beauty, and to all fresh aspects of truth, against the predominating narrowness of much that calls itself—and no doubt at bottom is—faith. If we read current literature, if we take up ecclesiastical newspapers, if we listen to the conversation of different classes of society, the fact strikes us—strikes me, if I may speak for myself—most painfully. Culture is pitted against faith, and faith against culture, as two irreconcilable things; the perfection of that which is

human is treated as having nothing to do with the trust in that which is Divine. The antithetical phrases which have come down to us from the past, or which we have invented for ourselves, are suggestive of the same opposition. Nature and grace, secular and spiritual, sacred and profane, science and religion, literature and dogma, humanitarianism and supernaturalism—expressions true enough as denoting different sides of the same thing—are too often understood to mean two things, not one thing under different aspects, like the shield of the image of Victory in the fable, with a side that is silver and a side that is gold. Religious men stigmatise intellectual insight as rationalism or infidelity: men of culture return the compliment, and insinuate, if they do not say, that faith is sheer illusion.

And thus men have parted the things which God has joined, although the greatest minds have ever protested against the divorce. Socrates—and in this no doubt he was wrong, and built his ethical theory on too narrow a basis—Socrates identified knowledge and morality: the partisans of some forms of belief who call themselves Christians have all but wholly sundered them. Clement of Alexandria held philosophy to be the ally of faith, and took for his motto—"Neither knowledge without faith, nor faith without knowledge."¹ Has the Christian Church always breathed

¹ "Ούτε ἡ γνώσις ἀνευ πίστεως οὐθ' ἡ πίστις ἀνευ γνώσεως" (Stromat. v. 1). It

the spirit of Clement? Alas! we seem to see realised in modern days the quaint fancy of Plato, that the soul of the human being was originally cut into two, and that each half soul is ever seeking its other half, having no rest until it has found it. So culture that is human, and faith which feels after and finds the Divine, stand apart, each incomplete without the other, each without the other unresting and unsatisfied. We can but sorrowfully protest against this schism of our nature; we can but declare that though these things are so, they ought not to be so, and that these severed elements of our being are meant to coalesce, like two dewdrops when they touch each other, into one bright and perfect whole.

It is true, culture is incomplete without faith, and faith is incomplete without culture. Without the faith which lifts the soul upward to an invisible Lord of the conscience, which makes duty the paramount sovereign of the life, which chastens and subdues the inner region of thought and emotion with an all-controlling ideal of perfect righteousness—intellect is but too apt to become its own end, and imaginative feeling to degenerate into a personal luxury, disregarding the

is true that Clement is here speaking of what we should call theological knowledge; but the words aptly gather up the tone and spirit of the great Alexandrian teachers of the third century A.D., Pantænus, Origen, and Clement, which Dr. John Henry Newman describes as coming like music to his inward ear (*Apologia*, p. 89).

wail of the world's sorrow and hiding out of sight the running sore of its moral evil. True as it is that religion has ever been found ready to unite itself with intolerance and with ignorance, it is equally true that culture has been found quite as capable of allying itself, not merely with frivolity, not merely with a lack of all depth of feeling, of all earnestness of moral purpose, but even, in certain times and places, with the foulest corruption.

It is but too certain that there have been periods of history when intellectual vigour, sense of beauty, refinement of taste, even much superficial susceptibility to emotion, have been associated with more or less of evil. All these have been powerless to keep under the brute nature which has risen up in assertion of its sensual or cruel impulses in the very teeth of the culture which has lacked either the will or the force to subdue them. "To have learned to give poison secretly and effectually, to have raised a corrupt literature to pestilent perfection, to have organised a successful scheme to arrest free inquiry, and to proscribe free expression, are works of knowledge and skill whose progress towards their goal has hardly conduced to the general good."¹ It must be acknowledged, with whatever reluctance, by all who will not

¹ Tylor, *Primitive Culture*, p. 24, 25.

play fast and loose with facts, that "a baser side of literature and of life" has often been turned towards us in the very centres of ancient and modern civilisation. In the most brilliant period of Athenian greatness, when art had reached its acme of noble simplicity, when poetry and oratory shed over the public life a glowing atmosphere of grace and beauty, when intellects unrivalled in force and subtlety discussed questions which men are debating still—evils which are not so much as named among ourselves were sapping the very foundations of moral order, and were made by men whose own personal purity is above suspicion the subject of jest and witticism. And other ages, splendid in art, bright with intellectual achievement—in Rome, the age of Augustus—in Italy, the age of the Medici and of Leo the Tenth—in France, the age of Louis the Fourteenth—these, too, have been ages of a culture which was quite compatible with heartless frivolity and with "rank corruption, mining all within."

Or, to come a little nearer home: Are we quite sure that in our own country and in our own day the cultivation of the understanding, combined though it be with the cultivation of taste, may safely supersede the faith of the heart? Perhaps I cannot do better than cite on this point some words of Mr. Herbert Spencer.

The "belief in the moralising effects of intellectual

culture," he says, "is flatly contradicted by facts." "Are not fraudulent bankrupts educated people, and getters-up of bubble companies, and makers of adulterated goods, and users of false trade-marks, and retailers who have light weights, and owners of unseaworthy ships, and those who cheat insurance companies, and those who carry on turf chicaneries, and the great majority of gamblers? Or, to take a more extreme form of turpitude, is there not among those who have committed murder by poison within our memories a considerable number of the educated—a number bearing as large a ratio to the educated classes as does the total number of murderers to the total population?"¹

Well, but it may be said, this is not culture. The modern apostle of culture would not for a single instant admit that mere intellectual acuteness varnished over with a superficial refinement is what he understands by culture. He pleads for "sweetness" as well as for "light,"—for a depth and warmth of pure emotion as well as for the mental vision which strives to see things as they are. Does he not expressly declare that the aim of culture is to make reason and the will of God prevail?

My brethren, this is just what I am saying. I am protesting against this unhappy divorce between mind

¹ "The Study of Sociology," p. 363.

and heart, between thought and conscience, between admiration of the beautiful and worship of the holy. Ah! well do I know that culture, in its truest and highest sense, is ever stretching out its hands towards the infinitude which faith apprehends, towards the High and Holy One who inhabiteth eternity, and whom faith adores. There are no doubt men who can cover up moral turpitude under a veil of outward beauty. There are men who can dwell in a region of literary trifling. There are those who can be so absorbed in some special scientific pursuit as to be indifferent to all that lies beyond. It is not the less true that as the mind strives to see and the soul uplifts itself to feel the wonder and glory of the universe, it touches at every point the shores of the infinite mystery, the sphere which religion claims as its own—the dread magnificence of the cosmic life, the awful forms of conscience and of duty, the solemn darkness of sorrow, the profound abyss of evil, and all the insoluble problems of our being.

And where this is so, culture and faith have already clasped each other's hands, although standing yet with half-averted faces, while the light from heaven is falling upon both. Socrates combined the keenest of intellects with an apostolic fervour and a fealty to conscience which were Christian before Christianity. Plato beheld all human life and all the world of

nature in the light of eternity, and the genius of the poet-philosopher has coloured both the language and the thought of the deepest of our Gospels. Philosophy in the first century of the Christian era had become mystical, devout, spiritual. In our own day, some of the loftiest minds in the world of science are drawn by an irresistible fascination to deal with the problems of theology. "A light that never was on sea or land" falls on the highest thinking of the age, and touches as with "the consecration and the poet's dream." And amidst much that is perplexing, much that is painful, in the attitude of modern thought towards traditional forms of belief, I cannot but see here the approximation of culture to faith.

"What, then, shall we say of faith? Ah! my brethren, I should not be dealing honestly with my subject if I did not avow my conviction that, in this schism between culture and faith, the fault is not solely on the side of culture. The faith which, in its innermost core, is an ineradicable element of human nature, an apprehension of the Infinite, an intuition of God, a sense of weakness and dependence, a cry of sorrow and a confession of sin, a reaching forth after immortality, a worship of supreme goodness,—who can deny that this faith in its historical development becomes encrusted with superstitions and overgrown with errors and ignorances which form no part of its

real nature? Christianity itself, the highest and holiest embodiment of faith, is no exception to this fact. And if faith is to permeate culture, it must borrow from culture all things that are honest, just, pure, and lovely — looking upon them not as the works of the Devil and the fruit of human corruption, but as the good and perfect gifts which come down from the Father of lights. We must cease to resist with blind tenacity and passionate zeal the sure teachings of science and the certain results of criticism. We must give up our Bibliolatry, and strive to understand the Book of which we make a fetish. In the language of Thomas Carlyle: “First must the dead letter of religion own itself dead and drop piecemeal into dust, if the living spirit of religion, freed from this its charnel-house, is to arise on us new-born from heaven, and with new healing under its wings.”

And so may we believe that it yet shall be. The dawn of a purer faith, truer to the spirit of the world-regenerating life and death of Jesus of Nazareth, is already faintly kindling in the sky; and as I turn in thought from the Apostle in Athens to the far-reaching words of the Master Himself, I think of those parables in which He foreshadowed the spiritual future of His faith as drawing all that is human into God, as incorporating and blending into its own being all things everywhere that are good, and bright, and fair,—the

pearl merchant seeking the goodly pearls that are akin to the pearl of great price,—the leaven that assimilates to itself, by the force of its own restless life, everything but grit,—the grain of mustard-seed which, drawing its nutriment from common earth and air, grows into an overshadowing tree, whose very leaves are for the healing of the nations.

III.

SENSUOUS AND SPIRITUAL RELIGION.

“Wherewith shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before the High God? Shall I come before Him with burnt-offerings, with calves of a year old? Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams or with ten thousands of rivers of oil? Shall I give my first-born for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul? He hath showed thee, O man, what is good: and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God.”—MICAH (vi. 6-8).

“Τῷ Θεῷ δεῖ πάντας ἀκολουθεῖν καὶ θεραπεύειν αὐτὸν ἀσκοῦντας ἀρετὴν· τρόπος γὰρ Θεοῦ θεραπείας οὗτος ὀσιώτατος.”—JOSEPHUS (*Contra Apion*, ii. 22).

“Ἀλλ’ ἐνόμιζε (Socrates) τοὺς θεοὺς ταῖς παρὰ τῶν εὐσεβεστάτων τιμαῖς μάλιστα χαίρειν.”—XENOPHON (*Memorab.* 1, 3, 3).

“Quin damus id Superis, de magna quod dare lance
Non possit magni Messallæ lippa propago:
Compositum jus fasque animo sanctosque recessus
Mentis et incoctum generoso pectus honesto.
Hæc cedo ut admoveam templis et farre litabo.”

PERSIUS (*Satir.* ii. 71-75).

III.

“Therefore disputed he in the synagogue with the Jews and with the devout persons, and in the market-place daily with them that met him. . . . And they took him and brought him unto Areopagus.”—ACTS xvii. 17, 19.

THE practice of St. Paul in his missionary work had been, up to this time, to seek out in any heathen city his own countrymen, and the proselytes who gathered around the synagogue, in order, if possible, to make these the nucleus of a Christian congregation. But in Athens he was seized with an overmastering impulse to speak directly to that Hellenic world which was still wholly uninfluenced by Hebrew beliefs. Dissatisfied with addressing himself to a mere handful of Jews and proselytes, “he disputed in the market-place daily with them that met with him,” whether they were Jews or Greeks, strangers or Athenians.

Now this bold plunge into the stream of Hellenic thought and life, in swimming against which he was supported only by the buoyancy of his faith, was alike an epoch in the spiritual history of the man and in that of the religion which he preached. It was the

severance of one more link in the chain which still bound him to the Church of Jewish origin and sympathies in Jerusalem. It was "the first public and direct conflict between Christianity and Paganism."¹ And it was, besides all this, an example in a most striking and impressive way of the distinction between sensuous and spiritual religion, between the religion which appeals to the senses and the religion which appeals to the conscience, between that which ministers to the lower and that which ministers to the higher nature of man. Athens was the most splendid type of the one; the other was proclaimed most clearly and intelligibly by the Apostle, who understood the spirit and aim of his Master as neither the twelve nor the Church of Jerusalem understood it, preaching a faith which has no limitation of time or place, which has its seat neither in holy city nor in sacred temple, but in the moral nature of God and in the profoundest needs and aspirations of man.

At first, indeed, it seemed as if this bold experiment were a failure. St. Paul's success in Athens was, to say the least, not great—nothing like his past success in Thessalonica and Beræa—his successes yet to come in Corinth. The idolatrous worship of Athens was more than a match, to all outward appearance, for

¹ Milman.

the spiritual faith of the Apostle. It was, however, the occasion of what Dean Milman has called "perhaps the most extensively and permanently effective oration ever uttered by man,"—the speech on the Areopagus.

The first impression made by his discussions in the market-place, where all the idlers, strangers as well as Athenians, gathered in knots to hear or tell the news, was that of curiosity. In this city of culture, where elegance was upon the whole more prized than truth, and where men regarded less *what* a man said than *how* he said it, St. Paul spoke at a disadvantage. Hebrew, not Greek, was his mother-tongue. His was not the ready flowing speech of the Alexandrian Apollos. "With stammering lips and another tongue" he spoke to the Athenian people, the very vehemence of his nature, charged with a truth too big for utterance, involving his sentences and tripping up his words. And so the hearers laughed when he misplaced an accent or mispronounced his Greek. Yet somehow the light Athenian was moved, not very profoundly, it is true, still he *was* moved by the deep, impassioned earnestness of the man, piercing like lightning from heaven through the veil of his foreign speech. "He is a 'babbler' no doubt,—a 'setter forth of strange gods' as likely as not. Still, 'we would know' a little better 'what these things mean.'" And so, half in earnest half in jest, they conducted him,

somewhat reluctantly apparently on his part, to the open space on the hill of the Areopagus, a spot which classic, and, from this time, Christian associations have alike made holy ground.

The great picture of Raffaele of St. Paul preaching on the Areopagus, in the fulness of manly strength and beauty, surrounded by the statues of gods and heroes, will rise to the memory of most of those who hear me. The spiritual grandeur of that memorable scene far outweighs its poetic beauty. With the waning glory of a dying creed are blending the dawning lights of the newly-risen Sun of righteousness. The hill on which St. Paul stood, a narrow ridge of limestone rock, with the Acropolis, crowned with the Parthenon, looking down upon it, had been, and perhaps still was, the seat of the sacred court of the Areopagus, which, before Pericles had shorn it of its power, had exercised supreme religious jurisdiction in Athens. Still are to be seen, hewn out of the rock, the seats of the judges; and to this place, hallowed by the memories of the past, the Athenians, with mock solemnity,¹ brought St. Paul to plead the cause of the new faith on the spot consecrated by the old. With the shadows of the great ages which were gone falling around him, with his own spirit kindling

¹See Baur, "Paulus der Apostel Jesu Christi," i 193, 194, ed. Zeller' 1866.

with hope for the future, he pleaded for God and for Christ.

Thus the religion of Jesus of Nazareth was on its trial in the person of His apostle before the splendid cultus of Paganism and the keen intellect of philosophy. On both these points I hope to say something in succeeding sermons. At present, I take the contrast which presents itself on the surface—the contrast between the religion that is outward and the religion that is inward—the religion of ritual and the religion of mind—the religion of Athens in her decline and the religion of Christ in the freshness of its youth.

For, my brethren, the worship of the Athenian had become in these latter days almost wholly a worship of outward form—graceful and beautiful, appealing to the senses by the glitter and fascination of its varied pomp, appealing to the fancy and the imagination, but not appealing to the reason or the conscience. It was, in its origin, the consecration of patriotism and of the institutions of the city. No doubt it had had in the past deeper elements—some sense of the awful mystery of human life and of human suffering such as *Æschylus* depicts, some sense of the unwritten laws of Divine justice and of the nobleness of obedience to the behests of duty which makes *Sophocles* almost Christian; but these deeper elements had detached themselves in time from religion to blend with philo-

sophy, and to sanctify the priesthood of literature. The worship, stripped of all its better faiths and of all its loftier ideas, became more and more sensuous—a glittering pomp and ceremonial which gratified the eye and agreeably diversified the graver work of life—but which was utterly destitute of all moral power over the heart of the worshipper.

Thought and conduct were wholly divorced from cult. No man, except, perhaps, he wished to justify some disgraceful act, seriously appealed to the current beliefs about the gods, whose statues stood in every street; no man joined in procession, hymn, or mystery, with any thought of becoming better, or with any idea of governing his life by his religion. For views about the universe or the spirit of the universe, men went not to the temples, but to the schools. For principles and rules of life they sought out the philosophers, not the priests. Yet this—the performance of acts which had lost their meaning, which had no elevating influence on men's conceptions of the Invisible, but rather detained them in the world of sight, which suggested little or nothing of hope or fear for the future, little or nothing for the guidance of the present,—this, clothed with the charms and splendours of architecture and of sculpture, bright with gay processions, festal seasons, sacrifices, chant, and hymn, this was religion, and it was religion

such as this that St. Paul confronted on the Areopagus with a faith that touched the depths of the human soul.

Yes, the faith which St. Paul preached on that memorable occasion was a faith which, piercing through the shows of sense, went at once to the heart of things, and made its appeal to the reason, the spiritual instincts, and the moral convictions of men. One thing strikes us forcibly as we read this marvellous discourse. St. Paul strove to *understand* Athenian idolatry before he condemned it. Guided by the light within his own soul, by the intuitions of a heart which yearned to liberate all men from the yoke of ignorance and sin, he recognized the possible good as well as the actual evil of all this pomp of sensuous worship. Somewhere underlying it all, he believed, however stifled by its superincumbent weight, was the vague craving for God and the power to discern between evil and good. In all this he beheld the misdirection and abuse of that *religious faculty* which has been *implanted* deep in the heart of man by God Himself.

“Ye men of Athens, I perceive that in all things ye are exceedingly devout.” So the Apostle begins his sermon. He appeals to no external authority, to no priesthood, to no book, to no tradition of Pharisee or of scribe, as he endeavours to convince these men of the misdirection of their worship. He

appeals to the hidden man of the heart, and thus he summons the idolatries of Athens before the tribunal of reason.

“In God we live, and move, and have our being: as certain of your own poets have said,”—Cleanthes or Aratus,—“‘For we are also His offspring.’ Forasmuch, then, as we are the offspring of God, *we ought not to think* that the Godhead is like unto gold, or silver, or stone, graven by art or man’s device.” He sees that all this multiplicity of religious symbols, so distracting to the worshippers, all this crowd of gods and of deified men, betrays the hidden weakness, the unsatisfying nature of their creed. “As I passed by and beheld the gods that ye worship, I found an altar with this inscription, To an Unknown God. Whom therefore ye worship and yet know not, Him declare I unto you;” the “God” who “made the world, and all things therein;” “the Lord of heaven and earth,” who “dwelleth not in temples made with hands;” “who is not far from every one of us;” whom we, His offspring, who have our very being rooted in His, ought to worship, not by costly oblation, not by offering, altar, fane, or statue, but by seeking and feeling after and so finding Him; by a devotion that is mental and spiritual like His own Nature. That Unknown God is the living God, who has bound into one vast brotherhood all nations of men on the face of the earth, shaping

and guiding their destiny; a God of living hearts, revealing Himself in our better thoughts and higher aspirations, not in the plastic art that moulds the metal or the stone.

Under all this "cheerful devotion" (as Gibbon calls it) of the Greek, under all this light, festive, frivolous attitude of the Athenian towards the mystery that besets us behind and before, St. Paul knows that there is latent in the deep places of our being a sense of responsibility, some vague idea of a life to come, of a judgment after death. "God now commandeth all men everywhere to repent." And though the sudden interruption of his speech has left it incomplete, we can see that, in the background of his thought lies the idea of the Beloved Son, whose life and death of self-offering unto God has lifted religion into the sphere where duty, under the form of trust and of love, has made all mere external worship weak and poor.

Thus St. Paul spiritualised religion, the Athenian sensualised it. Now let us understand this. The essential distinction between sensuous and spiritual religion lies not in the use of forms, for spiritual religion also uses forms; nor even of necessity in the kind of forms used, although in this, too, there is a natural harmony between spiritual religion and the outward type in which it expresses itself. The real

distinction lies in the place which is given to form in the mind of the worshipper.

St. Paul's quarrel with Athenian religion was not with the use of artistic beauty in the service of religion, but with the fact that the outward symbol, with all its grace and splendour, was the substitute for the reality of a spiritual faith. Accidentally, of course, the Apostle condemned the very symbols employed, partly because their multiplicity implied the multiplicity of the objects of worship, opposing "gods many and lords many" to the One living God, Lord of heaven and earth; and still more, because all this symbolism was the futile attempt to give outward shape and type to the Invisible Presence of whom all this visible universe is but the scintillation of His glory—is but the hem and skirt of His garment.

Still the condemnation of the forms of Greek religion is merely accidental. We cannot escape from form. We can but recognise its imperfections and inadequacy. The most spiritual faith must find for itself a fitting vesture. The purest devotion, when it passes from silence into words and acts, must clothe itself in forms which sense furnishes. Even primitive Christianity did not wholly discard the aids of art. The immortal youth of Apollo suggested the figure of the Good Shepherd. The crowns and palms of the Olympic conquerors became the symbols of Christian victory.

The ship ploughing her way through tempestuous seas was the type of the Christian life. The cross was the outward and visible sign of the offering of self to God. And we, too, may worship Him under forms and symbols which, however inadequate, need not be mean. We can worship in spirit and in truth at least as easily in a cathedral as in a barn,—with noble architecture and sacred chant and song, with an atmosphere of beauty breathed around us, quite as readily as within four whitewashed walls. Spiritual religion allies itself with the spirit of beauty, takes up into itself and consecrates by its own heavenly presence the forms in which it is clothed and the words in which it finds its utterance. Not in the use of forms, and not in the baldness or in the beauty of outward worship, lies the distinction between the religion that is sensuous and the religion which is spiritual.

No; the distinction lies a great deal deeper than this. In this sermon on the mount of the Areopagus, breathing the very spirit of a still greater Sermon on the Mount in Galilee, the Apostle of Jesus Christ is setting the religion of reason, of conscience, of holy aspirations and devout affections, over against the religion which wove around the worshipper a many-coloured veil of graceful imagery, but which never touched the moral nature, which gave him no

victory over himself, and brought him no nearer to God. The most spiritual religion is fain to express itself in forms which are borrowed from the things which eye hath seen and ear hath heard; but sensuous religion substitutes the things which eye hath seen and ear hath heard for the things which the eye hath *not* seen and the ear hath *not* heard.

That is sensuous religion which gives to the outward form the place which is due to God, which is indifferent to the moral nature of the object worshipped so long as the ritual of worship is punctually performed—in which the act of worship is everything, the object of worship nothing. The virgin goddess or the sea-born Aphrodite, what did it matter so that the offering was duly paid, the hymn sung, the procession accomplished, the sacrifice presented? That is sensuous religion in which the end is mainly if not wholly the temporary stimulus of the imagination and of the emotions—not the cultivation of rational conceptions, of faith purified from superstition, of affections habitually devout, of earnest moral purpose, of the constraining influence of a holy ideal in the work of our everyday lives. And that is spiritual religion which places God above every form of worship—which uses forms merely as helps to rise to Him—which strives to be pure in heart and so to see God—which aims at consecrating every faculty to Him which seeks to understand that which may be

known of God, and to trust with the fearless confidence of love the mystery which cannot be known—which cherishes the noble aspiration, and endeavours to make it a thing of flesh and blood in this work-day world. Sensuous religion hides God: spiritual religion reveals Him. Sensuous religion begins and ends in sense. Spiritual religion makes an unseen presence of supreme goodness the life and light of the soul.

And so far as what is called Christianity has divorced itself, in this age or in any other, in our own Church or any other Church, from the highest reason and from conscience, so far has it become the very thing on which St. Paul gazed in Athens with wonder and with pity. The tide of living faith has ebbed and left the outward form stranded on the shore. Men have always differed, perhaps always will differ, as to what may be the best external pattern and fashion of worship. Such differences of opinion and sentiment are in themselves of the slightest possible moment, and ought to be tolerated on both sides with the utmost latitude of charity. The grand question is, What and whom do we worship? and with what manner of intellectual vision, moral purpose, devout affection, and noble conduct do we honour Him? And the future of the Church lies, in spite of blind obstructiveness, in spite of blind reaction, not with those who are striving to

resuscitate outworn creeds, or to adapt to modern life the cast-off garments of the past, but with those who are endeavouring to develop the spiritual elements of faith in harmony with the highest truth which man can reach, in affinity with the noblest spirit man can breathe.

IV.

*PAGANISM AND CHRISTIANITY:
FIRST CENTURY A. D.*

“Quum omnibus in rebus temeritas in assentiendo errorque turpis est, tum in eo loco maxime, in quo judicandum est, quantum auspicis rebusque divinis religionique tribuamus. Est enim periculum ne aut neglectis iis impia fraude, aut susceptis anili superstitione obligemur.”—CICERO (*De Divinatione*, i. 4).

“The Apostolic writings present us with the most astonishing moral phenomenon that human history exhibits. The intensity of the moral heat is something scarcely comprehensible by us.”—DONALDSON (*Critical History of Christian Literature*, i. 50).

“A Pagan suckled in a creed outworn.”—WORDSWORTH.

“Quando amore viene in sulla terra, sceglie i cuori più teneri e più gentili delle persone più generose e magnanime: e quivi siede per brevo spazio: diffondendovi sì pellegrina e mirabile soavità ed empirendoli di affetti sì nobili e di tanta virtù e forza, che eglino allora provano cosa altutto nuova nel genere umano, piuttosto verità che rassomiglianza di beatitudine.”—GIACOMO LEOPARDI (*Storia del Genere Umano*).

IV.

"Certain philosophers of the Epicureans, and of the Stoics, encountered him. . . . Then Paul stood in the midst of Mars Hill, and said, Ye men of Athens, I perceive that in all things ye are too superstitious."—Acts xvii. 18, 22.

THE Greek and Roman civilisation in the first century of the Christian era bears, in several of its features, more than a superficial resemblance to the mental and religious life of our own day. One characteristic of the age was the co-existence of superstition and of unbelief. The cultivated few were all but wholly alienated from the religion of the state: the multitude thronged the temples of the gods. We should read, however, the signs of those times—as, indeed, we should read the signs of our own times—far too hastily if we were to assume that superstition and unbelief divide the empire of the world between them, and leave no room for any intermediate thing. There are two facts conspicuous in this critical period of the history of human development which seem to me fairly to prove that the fountain of spiritual life in the soul of man is not capable of being permanently dried up

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under either of these influences. The first of these facts is, that at this time philosophy, or, to speak more accurately, the Platonic and Stoical schools of philosophy, had become—less, perhaps, in Athens than in Rome—spiritual and religious rather than speculative, breathing a tender, devout enthusiasm, which stands in marked contrast with the more purely intellectual discussions of an earlier age. The second fact is the rise and progress of Christianity, triumphing mainly by its own inherent moral force alike over superstition and unbelief. And both these facts are encouraging to those who, in the present day, believe that God has reserved for the human race some better thing than either the total abandonment of faith in Him or endless wandering in the mazes of blind irrational credulity.

Of these two extremes, Athens, at the time of St. Paul's visit, furnishes us with a conspicuous example. She was at once the seat of religious worship and of the philosophical schools—at once eminently devout and eminently tolerant of speculative unbelief—the place where, of all others, Paganism seemed most firmly rooted, and yet also the place where men discussed with the utmost latitude and freedom questions which struck at its root.

Athens, no doubt, had not always been thus tolerant. Without mentioning the names of others, the fate of

Socrates, condemned to death for "not worshipping the gods whom the city worships, and for introducing new divinities of his own," will occur to every one. But in the age of St. Paul, Athens was intolerant no more, "convinced," says Gibbon, "by the experience of ages, that the moral character of philosophers is not affected by the diversity of their theological speculations."

All opinions, of what kind soever, might now be fearlessly propounded in Athens. All negations and all assertions might propagate themselves as they could. Every foreign cult, the worship of all sorts of strange gods, Syrian, Egyptian, and Persian, was tolerated, provided only these exotic forms of faith made no attempt to interfere with the national ritual. A Jewish synagogue was planted here without molestation. Here also grew up a Christian Church; and though St. Paul "seemed to be a setter forth of strange gods"—the very charge which cost Socrates his life—and though St. Paul preached, in terms not to be mistaken, the nothingness of the deities of Athens, the Athenians only laughed, regarding him as a harmless enthusiast, not as a dangerous heretic. Through nearly five centuries the liberty of thought survived in Athens. Christians and non-Christians alike frequented her schools. Almost at the same period Julian, who as emperor renounced Christianity, and Libanius, the heathen sophist, studied wisdom side by side with the

Christian fathers St. Basil and St. Gregory of Nazianzum ; and not until the intolerance which ^{now} called itself Christian zeal—the spurious child of corrupt theology and Byzantine despotism — struck a fatal blow at intellectual freedom when Justinian closed the schools of philosophy, did Athens cease to be the home of liberal culture.

But though Athens was no longer intolerant, she was still devout. St. Paul spoke the truth when he said, “Ye men of Athens, I perceive that in all things ye are exceedingly devout,”—god-fearing beyond other men, “excessively addicted to the worship of supernatural powers.”¹ Side by side with a scepticism that questioned all things human and divine, which denied the possibility of our knowing anything whatever, even that we do *not* know anything, existed an outward religiousness which made Josephus describe the Athenians as “the most devout of all the Greeks,” which led Pausanias to speak to them as “excelling all other men in zeal for Divine worship,” and which struck the mind of St. Paul himself with a vehement emotion of surprise and sorrow. For Athens, although a city of widest tolerance, was still not a city of philosophers only, but a city of priests—the city, above all, of the Eleusinian mysteries, famed through all the

¹ Merivale.

earth ; city of religious processions, of pomp of ritual, of fragrance of incense and sacrifice, of magnificent temples, of consecrated statues of gods and heroes. "It is wise to speak well of all the gods, especially at Athens," was the saying of a Pagan mystic half a century later. In all this Athens was the type and representative of the Pagan world of that day.

We are apt to think of that time as an age of utter scepticism, of total and all but universal disbelief. But this is a mistake. The beliefs of Paganism, in some or other of its forms, were still alive, except in the minds of a very small minority. The Apostle, whose message was received with incredulity at Athens by Epicureans and Stoics, was well nigh worshipped as a god at Lystra. While among the educated classes positive science and philosophic culture had swept away all faith in the myths and legends of the popular theology, the men, women and children of the country districts and of the villages still received them with unhesitating credence ; and even in the cities the old faiths blended in the minds of the great mass of the people with the fresh streams of supernatural beliefs which poured in from the East with astrology and magic, with demonolatry and witchcraft, with invocations of the spirits of the dead, and anticipations of the approaching end of the world. In Rome there came in under Augustus a marked revival of ritualistic religion.

Temples were repaired or rebuilt. Fallen shrines and dismantled fanes were upreared again. The functions of the priesthood were once more active. Men flung themselves once more, after the reign of terror and the horrors of the Roman revolution, at the feet of the gods, with the feeling embodied in the utterance of our own poet:—

“The world is weary of the past;
Oh might it die or rest at last.”

And thus, in the very teeth of a scepticism in the educated classes as thoroughgoing as any which the world has ever seen, a religion sensuous, ritualistic, glittering with unrivalled pomp and splendour, revived and swayed with a potent influence the outer form and fashion of men's lives.

And now observe, in this world of such extremes, in this city of supreme devoutness and of supreme disbelief, where the few believed nothing and the multitude believed everything; where gorgeous ritual and mechanical worship drew crowds to temple and altar, and men who laughed in their sleeve at the faith of the vulgar thronged the halls of science and the porticoes of philosophy, appeared a man who stood aloof from both extremes, who proclaimed the vanity of the worship that shaped the Godhead under the forms of sense, but who preached at the same time a faith which made its appeal to the

consciences and the hearts of men. A spiritual religion rose upon the horizon of the world, and vanquished alike its superstition and its unbelief. At this very time the religious revolution was preparing which flooded the world with a new order of ideas and a fresh ideal of life.

St. Paul, standing on the Areopagus, preached a faith spiritual, not sensuous—a faith rooted in the conscience, in the affections and sympathies, in the deepest religious instincts of men—a faith in God, not in gods—in a living Spirit, not in “gold or silver or stone”—in a moral responsibility, in a Divine judgment of human acts and thoughts, in life and immortality, in a perfect love and righteousness at war with the sins, but in sympathy with the souls of men. And the fact is past all question that this spiritual faith which St. Paul preached won its best victories in those its earlier days, when it was purest, when the intensity of its moral heat was greatest, when its forms of worship were simplest—prayer and praise and breaking of bread in the upper chamber, or in the catacomb, or in the lecture-hall—when it had no systematic theology, when priesthood it had none, when populace and magistrates and philosophers were all arrayed against it, and when yet, by simple force of moral suasion, it had become such a living power in the heart of the Roman Empire that

it had, in the former half of the second century, in one province at least, in the province of Bithynia, emptied the temples, ruined the trade in sheep and oxen for sacrifice, and brought to a standstill all the routine of Pagan ritual. "So mightily grew the word of God and prevailed."

Here, then, my brethren, we have the fact that in the world of Pagan superstitions and of philosophic disbeliefs sprang up a religion which, while discarding superstition, revived faith, and which in some form or other has reigned ever since. Surely the fact is one which may let in on perplexed minds in our time some ray of light and hope for the religious future of the world. We are told often enough in our own day that our choice lies solely between these two extremes,—the rejection of all theological ideas whatever, or the contented, unthinking acquiescence in traditional dogma and ritual routine. We are assured by one school of thought that it is idle to attempt to disencumber religion of the superstitions that incrust it, that every such attempt is mere compromise which will inevitably fail, and that consistency demands that we abandon all worship as futile, and adopt a non-theistic philosophy of the universe. "Yes," says the Ultramontane, "your sceptical friend is so far right that the rejection of Papal infallibility and of the sacrifice of the mass involves you logically in the atheism in which it

practically lands you." And it would be difficult to say from which of these two parties, from those who believe too little, or from those who believe too much, the men who are striving to purify faith from superstition receive the hardest measure.

Well, it is not the first time that things such as these have been said. In the age of Cicero, about a century before St. Paul preached the Unknown God to the Athenians, similar arguments were bandied to and fro in theological and philosophical discussions. Men who had adopted the creed of Epicurus said, "There is nothing to worship." "No," said the orthodox Roman, who pleaded for the retention of the whole Italian mythology,—“No, there *is* nothing to worship if we let go the customs and beliefs of our ancestors.” Cicero himself held that there was some third thing possible between believing nothing and believing all. "It is easy," he says, "to get rid of superstition when you do it by getting rid of all Divine power."¹ And Cicero was right, although he little dreamed that his own somewhat languid belief would receive in the course of the next two hundred years so startling a confirmation. He did not foresee that from a nation

¹ De Nat. Deor., i. 42, 117. This, I think, may be fairly regarded as Cicero's own sentiment. "Vim Deorum" is, of course, polytheistic. The rendering "Divine power" is more suitable for the text, being equally applicable to Monotheism.

which he heartily despised should come forth a living faith in a Divine power,—a word which, originating in the carpenter's shop, and preached by fishermen and tent-makers, should vanquish the Paganism which darkened the world, should triumph over Greek and Italian mythology, Asiatic sun-worship and philosophical scepticism. And yet this, which Cicero, with all his reverence, would have thought impossible, came to pass.

Of course I know that it will be said that this new religion which conquered Paganism was itself not free from superstition: nay more, faith in the living God Himself is branded by some as only another form of credulity, somewhat more respectable, but not one whit more rational, than the Pagan's homage to the sun. Well, my brethren, to those who think thus, to those who believe that there is no essential difference between idolatry and worshipping Him in whom "we live and move and have our being," there is nothing more to be said. But it would be disingenuous to deny that any historical faith whatever in which spiritual intuition has clothed itself has ever been wholly free from admixture of error, weakness, and ignorance. Around the cradle of Christianity itself gathered Jewish narrowness and prejudice which went near to stifle the infant faith. Blended with the higher spirit which primitive Christianity breathed were undoubtedly many historical misapprehensions, anticipations of the ap-

proaching end of the world, belief in prodigies, misinterpretations of the Hebrew Scriptures, ready credence rendered to the Sibylline predictions. It would be, moreover, to set history at defiance to deny that the time came when the religion that had conquered Paganism became almost as corrupt as the Paganism which it supplanted, and far more intolerant.

Nevertheless, the fact remains that there rose up in this world a religion which protested against all national and local limitation of religion; which refused to be bound by the ritualism, Jewish or Pagan, which was strangling spiritual life; which, at least in its second phase, as taught by St. Paul, placed its own essence in faith, that is, in the spontaneous and free play of all the higher aspirations of the soul and in the adhesion of the individual conscience to God; which revolted with an earnestness and intensity which have never since died out against the immoralities, cruelties, and sensualisms of the Pagan world; which "spake a word in season unto him that is weary," coming with a message of love, forgiveness, and hope to the slave, to the poor, to women and children, to men who had nothing to live for, and cared not whether they lived or died; which preached the filiation of man to God and the love of God to man; which lifted the idea of immortality out of the region of scholastic dispute to make it the hope of all men; which inspired so intense

and glowing a spirit of moral conviction, that (in the language of Mr. Lecky) "for the love of their Divine Master, for the cause which they believed to be true, men, and even weak girls, endured all the atrocities of Pagan persecutions without flinching, when one word would have freed them from their sufferings;" which, above all, created a fresh type of human character, in setting forth as the highest ideal Him whose unselfish devotion, whose purity, love, faith, steadfast adherence to truth and good in the face of cruel wrong and suffering, have filled the earth with a glory "above all Greek, above all Roman fame."

A religion such as this is in its deepest root divine—a religion which may, nay, which must change its form with the widening thoughts of men, but which, in the nineteenth century as in the first, is a "well of water springing up into everlasting life," a witness to the nature of God. And the great lesson, I take it, which we of this day—so like in many of its aspects to the day when St. Paul preached in Athens—the great lesson which we may learn from the conflict of Paganism and Christ is this: Superstition is conquered not by disbelief but by faith. The *over*-belief which clouds the heavenly light in Europe, and, in fact, in England at this hour, will be overthrown not by the negation of religion but by its purification. Religion in some shape men will have. If

they cannot worship in the daylight, they will worship in the darkness; if they cannot worship a God that is known, they will worship a god that is unknown, or, still worse, *misknown*. Epicurus and the Epicureans attempted to cast out the demon of superstition by banishing all faith in the Divine from the souls of men. But superstition came back again with seven other demons worse than itself—with astrology and magic, with terrors of evil genii, and of apparitions from the dead, to fill the house that was “empty, swept, and garnished.” “Religion,” says Burke, “and not atheism, is the true remedy for superstition.” Not by treating as delusion all aspiration after the Divine; not by meeting the fanaticism of theology with a counter-fanaticism of science; not by attempting to cast out Satan by Satan, may we hope to deliver religious minds from superstition; but by “adding to faith knowledge,” and by breathing, “not in the oldness of the letter, but in the newness of the spirit,” the Divine inspiration of Christ.

V.

*PHILOSOPHY AND CHRISTIANITY:
FIRST CENTURY A. D.*

“Und in der That, ist es nicht die grosse, die wesentliche Leistung des Christenthums, dass es Leben gebracht hat? Religion gab es auch vorher, das Neue Testament giebt, wie man oft mit Spott oder Verwunderung ihm nachgerechnet hat, kaum Eine neue Lehre; was es Erhabenstes in der Moral hat, bieten ganz ähnlich gleichzeitige Schriftsteller der classischen Welt: Cicero, Seneca, später Plutarch. Aber dass dies keine blossen Moralsätze blieben, die einzelne Philosophen aufstellten, sondern, dass sie wirksame Antriebe wurden, dass aus den Buchstaben des Pergamentes Leben quoll: das ist das Werk des Christenthums.”—MAX WOLFF (*Das Evangelium Johannes in seiner Bedeutung für Wissenschaft und Glauben*, s. 52).

“Οἱ μετὰ λόγον βιώσαντες, Χριστιανοί εἰσι, καὶ ἄθεοι ἐνομίσθησαν, οἷον ἐν Ἑλλήσι μὲν Σωκράτης καὶ Ἡράκλειτος καὶ οἱ ὅμοιοι αὐτοῖς.”—JUSTIN MARTYR (*Apol.* i. 46).

“Le monde, revenu de la superstition païenne, a mis sa foi dans l’humaine sagesse et dans ceux qui la professent dignement.”—CONSTANT MARTHA (*Les Moralistes sous l’ Empire Romain*, p. 7).

V.

“Certain philosophers of the Epicureans, and of the Stoics, encountered him. . . . Then Paul stood in the midst of Mars Hill and said, Ye men of Athens, . . . as I passed by, and beheld your devotions, I found an altar with this inscription, ‘To the Unknown God.’ Whom therefore ye ignorantly worship, Him declare I unto you.”—ACTS xvii. 18, 22, 23.

IT is a fact of which it would be difficult to over-estimate the significance in the history of religious development, that in the first century of our era a change came over the spirit of philosophy, transmuting it into a religious faith and inspiring it with a mystical enthusiasm. When we turn from the writings of Cicero to those of Seneca, the contemporary of St. Paul, we cannot help being struck with the fact that the Platonic and Stoical schools of philosophy for the most part represent a movement of the human mind in the direction of spiritual religion. Philosophy has ceased to be exclusively speculative and intellectual—it has become devout, seeking and feeling after God, who is not far from every one of us. We may say of philosophy, during the period when Christianity was silently

making its way, what the late Frederick Denison Maurice has said of Socrates: "Instead of trying to account for the existence of the universe, he was for ever craving for a light to show him his own path through it." It was not that the speculative element had altogether disappeared, but it was that the questions which touch our own personal being, the attitude of the soul towards the mystery around us, our bearing and conduct amidst the sins and sorrows of life—in a word, those things which concern us as human creatures—are uppermost in the thoughts of men like Seneca, and, somewhat later, of men like Epictetus and Marcus Aurelius.

In placing before you under this point of view the philosophy of the first century in its relation to Christianity, I must take you from Athens to Rome. Learning apart from life has a tendency to degenerate into dilettantism or mere rhetoric. "The schools of Athens" in her decline "were fruitful in pedants, but failed to produce true men."¹ Of many of her later productions has to be said what Bentley said of the Letters of Phalaris: "You feel by the emptiness and deadness of them that you converse with some dreaming pedant with his elbow on his desk." But in Rome, where the rush and stir of life were for ever

¹ Finlay, "History of Greece under the Romans," p. 209.

sounding like the waves of the sea in the thinker's ears—in the city which St. Paul and Juvenal have described in such scathing words and angry lines, where sin and vice and folly trod upon each other's heels, where tragedy and farce alternated in men's lives, and there was but "one step from the sublime to the ridiculous"—where luxury and poverty stood out side by side in colossal magnitude, where servility, baseness, cruelty, and treachery prospered, and noble spirits escaped from the reach of the despot's arm only by death—in Rome, the philosopher looked out from his studious retreat upon a spectacle which saddened his heart, which made him "hang his head, and blush to think himself a man"—which moved him to hatred of vice, to sympathy with sorrow, to pity for degradation—which fired with a passion of human emotion the whole circle of his thought.

And thus it was in Rome—much more than in Athens—that philosophy assumed the functions of religion. At the same time it would be unjust to forget that it was from Athens that came the original impulse which transformed philosophy into devotion. That impulse proceeded from Socrates, whom the Christian historian Neander has rightly called "the greatest man of the ancient world." He it was who initiated the spiritual and moral movement which transferred inquiry from the world without to the

world within, from outward nature to the mind of man—a movement which, passing through Plato, and Zeno, and a host of lesser though still bright names, onwards into Italy, became under the practical genius of Rome a religious element, a moral teaching power in the queen city of the nations.

In his sermon on the Areopagus, St. Paul, it has been said, “imbued philosophy with a profound sentiment of religion.”¹ No doubt this is true, but it is also true that much of the philosophy of the age was already imbued with the sentiment of religion, and among St. Paul’s stoical hearers may well have been some who, while rejecting his special message, felt themselves in harmony with the general spirit of his speech. However widely the creed of the apostle differed from the doctrines of the Academe and the Porch, there were some things in which they were in real agreement. A large section of philosophers preached, as St. Paul did, the right of the higher nature to predominate over the lower, the superiority of soul to sense, of mind to matter; and the very terms in which Christian theology, borrowing from St. Paul, sets forth the antagonism between the better and the worse impulses of our nature—the terms, so familiar to the readers of the New Testament, “the spirit and

¹ Milman.

the flesh"—were employed in the schools. Philosophy, too, preached detachment from earth and contemplation of eternal things. It preached the love of goodness for its own sake, apart from all fear of punishment or hope of reward, and held that by virtue we became partakers of a Divine nature.

Now, such devout and earnest minds as these were seekers after God. They believed in a Universal Mind, in a Spirit of the Universe, and listened approvingly as St. Paul described the Godhead as "dwelling not in temples made with hands," as "Lord of heaven and earth," as "Him in whom we live and move and have our being;" and it was of such men as these that Justin Martyr, the Christian Apologist, said, "These men are Christians, not atheists." It must be remembered that, however cold and abstract was their speculative doctrine about God, their hearts were often better than their heads. Just as the Christian theologian in Alexandria or Ephesus (or, for that matter, in Munich or in Oxford), discussing metaphysical questions about the Trinity, is in a different attitude of mind from the same man worshipping in hours of weakness or sorrow the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, so, too, Platonist and Stoic often came down from those frozen summits of speculation about Godhead to cherish, in devouter moods, the idea of sympathy between the spirit of God and men, to feel some-

thing of a personal relation towards a higher Being.

Permit me to touch briefly for a few moments on these spiritual, ethical, and practical aspects of the Gentile philosophy in St. Paul's age.

Of conscious life after death the philosophy of this time says little. It was rarely affirmed and rarely denied. It was admitted as a great and noble possibility—an aspiration—a hope—almost a faith. Nor should I think that it was the Stoics who mocked when St. Paul spoke of the resurrection of the dead. There were men in this age who did not despise prayer and meditation as communion with God, who held a belief in some kind of providential government of the world, and who were fully possessed with the idea of a city of God, of a brotherhood of mankind, in which even the slave had a part. The expression of a bright hope for the future of the human race, which is nowhere found in Cicero, is found in Seneca, and "Seneca has written a fine book on Providence, for which there was not even a name at Rome in the time of Cicero."¹

Nor let us suppose that all this higher and better feeling in the hearts of Pagan saints and sages was wholly devoid of some measure of the spirit of Him

¹Quoted from De Maestre by Merivale, "History of the Romans under the Empire," vi. 458 n., cabinet ed.

who "was moved with compassion on the multitudes because they fainted and were scattered abroad as sheep having no shepherd." A lesser portion of that spirit had fallen on philosophy. So long as philosophy was purely intellectual, it felt no mission to enlighten the common man. "Philosophy is satisfied," said Cicero, "with a select few as its judges. It designedly shuns the multitude, which, in fact, suspects and hates it." Of this passage a modern writer¹ has remarked, that "it sounds like God's judgment on earth against philosophy." Yet surely it stands to reason that, so long as themes of a purely abstract kind, remote from the immediate wants of men, were being discussed, they could be discussed profitably only among those who were sufficiently educated to understand them. But it was not so with Socrates, who had preached with the fervour of an apostle in the streets of Athens deliverance from the "conceit of knowledge without the reality," and from the bondage of vice. And it was not so at this time in Rome with the philosophy which owed its first religious impulse to Socrates. As soon as philosophy became devout, it sought to reach the hearts and consciences of men. The school and lecture-room fulfilled the function, and were, in fact, the prototype of the later Christian pulpit. The

¹ Eliot, "Liberty of Rome," ii. 429; Cicero, *Tusc. Quæst.* ii. 1.

doors, like the doors of our churches, were for the most part open to all who chose to enter ; and many a slave, like Epictetus, many an artisan or petty tradesman, must have heard within the walls discourses addressed, like the Christian sermon, to the spiritual part of man, and resulting in the conversion from evil to good.

Noble lives were lived as the fruit of this new teaching and preaching power. Martyrs died for philosophy, or rather for the virtue which it inspired. Under its influence a humanising spirit breathed itself into the foremost minds, and, towards the close of the century, made itself felt in the palace of the Cæsars. Seneca, who, like St. Paul, does not condemn slavery, yet, like St. Paul, pleads for the slave. Juvenal lashes with the keenest sting of his satire the heartless Roman lady for maltreatment of her slaves, condemning cruelty towards those who are of the same flesh and blood, of the same mind and soul as ourselves. The gladiatorial games, the shambles where men "were butchered to make a Roman holiday," of which a century before the human Cicero speaks in only the faintest tone of deprecation, which a century later the letter from Vienne and Lyons finely calls "the public spectacle of the inhumanity of the Gentiles," are already vehemently condemned by Seneca ; and it was a philosopher who, when a pro-

posal was made to introduce the Roman amphitheatre into Athens, said, "First, then, Athenians, you must cast down the altar erected to Mercy." And it was under the same influence that, in the early part of the second century, Hadrian and the Antonines established orphan asylums, and strove in various ways to mitigate the cruel practices which had come down to them from antiquity.¹

Such was the religious tone and bent of much that was called philosophy in the first century and in part of the second century after Christ. The lovers of wisdom were seekers after God. And, my brethren, we shall miss, I believe, the real lesson of these facts if we assume, as too often is assumed in a polemical interest, that such philosophy was in this earlier stage a plagiarism either of Judaism or of Christianity. There are no facts to justify this assumption. It is true that Judaism did leaven to some considerable extent the artisan and slave population in Rome at this period. Many Jewish customs, too, particularly the observance of the Sabbath, were familiarly known in the large cities. But evidence wholly fails that the spiritual elements of the Hebrew religion had affected the educated classes, who, in their ignorance of what

¹ See Capes, "The Age of the Antonines," p. 18, and cf. p. 74; Merivale, "History of the Romans under the Empire," viii. 55, 56, 193, cabinet ed.

that religion really was, held the Jewish race in supreme contempt. We have but to read the account which Tacitus gives of the origin and character of the Hebrew nation and its religion to see how utterly these were misconceived. And as for Christianity, it had not as yet had time to make its message heard among the educated. No doubt, at a much later period, when Christianity had already become a potent influence in the Greek and Latin world, the new Platonism was largely a plagiarism of the rising faith, just as the new Paganism of Julian was an imitation of the Church. But it was not so in the year 51, nor for a long time afterwards. No; "God fulfils Himself in many ways." What we see here is the Spirit of God blowing where He listeth—human speculation touched by the breath of a Divine inspiration. Christianity was in the air, waiting only the moment when the gathered streaks of vapour, radiant with the glory of the sun, should break and come down in rain from heaven. The Divine reason, whose highest revelation was in the word and life of the Beloved Son, was also in the deep night of Paganism a light shining in the darkness, and a light which was the life of men.

Yes! philosophy and Christianity too often misunderstood each other, were too often arrayed against each other. It is but too sadly true that in later times men who called themselves philosophers lent them-

selves to the maltreatment of Christians. Nay, the great, wise, and noble emperor, Marcus Aurelius, persecuted the Church which he failed to understand ; a fact which, as Mr. John Stuart Mill implies, "is one of the most tragical facts in all history." And the Church, when it gained the power, retaliated to its own real detriment by proscribing for ages all liberty of thought. Not the less true is it that philosophy and Christianity were in fact allies, fighting against the same foes—superstition, ignorance, shamelessness, profligacy, and sin. Not the less true is it that philosophy, like John the Baptist, was the forerunner of the Christ, preparing the way of the Lord, and making His paths straight.

The very language which Christianity employed in addressing itself to the world, was the creation of philosophy. The narrow vocabulary, the unyielding construction of the Aramaic or Hebrew of that day would never have lent themselves to the subtle argumentation of St. Paul or the meditative soliloquies of St. John. The old wine-skin would have been rent, and the word of life spilt like the new wine. It was Socrates who gave to the tongue of Greece those sharp ethical distinctions which made it capable of expressing every shade of moral and spiritual meaning. It was Plato who shaped common words to become the vehicle of ideas which trembled heaven-

ward like a flame of fire. It was Philo who, in Alexandria, blended the thought of Plato and the faiths of the Hebrew Scriptures, and so prepared the very cast of expression in which the preachers of the Gospel spake to Greeks, in which the New Testament was written. The very language of the later creeds was furnished by the Greek philosophical schools. Humanly speaking, had Socrates never cross-questioned in the market-place of Athens, St. Paul could never have disputed there with all who met with him. Had Plato never taught, the fourth Gospel could never have been written. And those spiritual thoughts, those noble aspirations so closely bordering upon Christianity, sometimes even identical with much of its teaching, which we trace in the philosophy of the first century—a resemblance which gave rise to the fiction that Seneca was a friend and pupil of St. Paul—these were scattered everywhere as germs of religious life, which awaited only the quickening light and warmth of the Sun of righteousness to develop into a higher faith. The devout and spiritual philosophy of that age broke up the hard glebe of the soil in which the tree of life was rooted. When the fulness of time was come, God sent forth His Son into a world which prophet and philosopher alike had prepared for His coming.

And yet it will be said, and said justly, Christianity accomplished the work wherein philosophy failed.

Undoubtedly it did so. For Christianity was strong in two grand motive powers in which philosophy, religious as it was, was weak. Christianity gathered the highest spiritual ideas of the age around faith in the One living God, and around a new and higher type of manhood. God and Christ—the One Eternal Fountain of all life in the universe, and the highest, holiest manhood—these were the two master-influences which realised a kingdom of God on earth.

My brethren, it was the misfortune of philosophy that there was nothing in the popular creed, nothing in the popular worship, to which it could attach itself in order to leaven the mass of men with a purer faith. The mythology which had its roots in the prehistoric past, and which survived amidst the higher culture as a lower form of religion, was not susceptible of developing into a loftier belief, into a holier aspiration. The multiplicity of gods, the contradictory, impure, trivial, sometimes malignant legends which gathered around each local shrine, were positive obstacles to every attempt to charge polytheism with a spiritual significance. The better minds had risen to a conception of the Divine unity, but it remained a philosophic faith of the few which found no point of contact or of assimilating power in the creeds and rites of the many. Plato, who believed that "God ought to be represented as He is," felt that out of the Homeric legends no life

for the soul could come, and banished the poems of Homer in consequence from his ideal republic. It is not surprising that philosophic minds, despairing of weaning the people from the national worship or of penetrating it with a truer faith, should have found it necessary to divorce philosophy almost wholly from the beliefs and the ritual of polytheism. Nor is it surprising that, under conditions such as these, no ideal of the higher religious life should be realised in flesh and blood. But there was one nation in which monotheism after ages of conflict had won the victory, and expelled the poison of impure and cruel idolatries from its blood. It was with an assured and confident faith that St. Paul proclaimed in Athens, in Corinth, and in Rome, the One living God, the One infinite Father of all. And it was with a faith equally assured and glowing with a concentrated passion of love that he and the Churches which he founded set forth the new and higher type of manhood which had been manifested in the life and death of the Lord. All the truer conceptions, all the nobler aspirations, all the better thoughts which were floating in men's minds, crystallised at the touch of the new faith which declared the One God, and revealed in the parable of the history of Jesus what it is to be God's Beloved Son. Philosophy was religious, but it could not be called religion, at least not for the many, until its spiritual elements,

so widely dissipated, were concentrated into one burning focus around the One God and the one human life that was and is the brightest image of God.

“When old things terminate and new commence,
A solitary great man’s worth the world,
God takes the business into His own hands
At such time : who creates the novel flower
Contrives to guard and give it breathing room.”

So speaks a great English poet,¹ and so was it then, when the faith of which Jesus was the centre drew up into its life and gathered into its own being all the better influences of the world.

¹ Robert Browning.

VI.

ANCIENT AND MODERN SCEPTICISM.

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“Τί δὲ καὶ ἀφ’ ἐαυτῶν οὐ κρίνετε τὸ δίκαιον.” — WORDS OF THE LORD (*Luke* xii. 57).

“Πάντα δοκιμάζετε· τὸ καλὸν κατέχετε.”—ST. PAUL (1 *Ep. ad Thes-sal.* v. 21).

“Non hæc religio amplius, sed superstitio est dicenda. Quænam religio illa est, quæ hoc dicere prohibeat quod verum est?”—VIT-RINGA (*Observationes Sacræ*, i. 252).

“Inimicos huic dispensationi, quæ facta est per Jesum Christum et hunc crucifixum, generaliter accipere . . . debemus omnes qui vetant credere incognita et certam scientiam pollicentur . . . Non quod scientiæ pollicitatio reprehendenda sit, sed quod gradum saluberrimum et necessarium fidei negligendum putant, per quem in aliquid certum, quod esse nisi æternum non potest, oportet ascendi. Hinc eos apparet nec ipsam scientiam habere, quam contempta fide pollicentur, quia tam utilem ac necessarium gradum ejus ignorant.”—S. AUGUSTINUS (*Enarrat. in Psalm. viii.*, Oper. tom. viii., p. 34, Basileæ, Frob. 1529).—[I strike out “*debere*” as unintelligible and omitted in good editions, as the Benedictines and Migne’s.]

“The faculty of reason is the candle of the Lord within us.”—BISHOP BUTLER (*Analogy*, Part ii.).

VI.

“Then certain philosophers of the Epicureans, and of the Stoics, encountered him. . . . And when they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some mocked.”—Acts xiii. 18, 32.

IN taking for my subject “Ancient and Modern Scepticism,” the first question which we naturally ask is, What do we mean by scepticism?

Now this word scepticism, although it has acquired an unfavourable sense, is a very innocent word, and the thing signified is, in its own place, the right and the duty of every human being. The primary meaning of scepticism is simply that of inquiry or investigation. The secondary meaning, closely connected with the former and springing out of it, is that of doubt. Doubt is the necessary concomitant of inquiry. We inquire only *when* we doubt and *because* we doubt. The stimulus to investigation, the essential condition of all inquiry, is the questioning whether the thing is this or that, whether this road or that conducts to the temple of truth. There can be no acquisition of knowledge, and there can be no real, solid conviction of an intellectual order in matters of religion, except through

inquiry and doubt. Without inquiry there can be no progress, and there can be no inquiry unless there be doubt. If the thinkers of Greece had not initiated a wise and rational scepticism, we might at this moment be believing that this planet is the fixed centre of the universe, and still be worshipping Woden or Thor.

In this, then, its proper meaning of inquiry, scepticism is associated with the noblest activity of the human intellect in its search after truth. And there is no region—none at least that is accessible to human thought—that is to be railed off as holy ground forbidding the approach of inquiry. There is no class of subjects whatever that can be legitimately shut out from its scrutiny. And yet, even in the region of the physical sciences, the right of investigation is admitted in some quarters only grudgingly and with reservation, while in theology men are ever striving to draw a line, and to say to inquiry, “Thus far shalt thou come, and no farther.” Now the line can be drawn, and even then must be drawn by the inquirer himself, only where the human faculties have come to the end of their tether, which they have not done by a long way yet; and the sooner we admit this right of rational scepticism ungrudgingly and frankly, the better will it be for ourselves, the better will it be for the cause of a real and living faith in God.

If faith is to be something more than the ship-

wreck of the reason or a cry of despair, it must be compatible with the fullest and freest inquiry. No greater disservice can be done to spiritual religion and to pure theology in this age than to set up the authority of an infallible church or the dead letter of an infallible book in opposition to the advancement of learning and to the progress of science—to make unverified traditional opinions a barrier to historical criticism and to the investigation of nature. One thing at least is certain: Christianity in its origin—before church councils tampered with it—before even one line of the New Testament was written—was in principle the recognition of the right and duty of the individual soul to decide for itself in matters pertaining to God. I do not say that this idea was distinctly formulated, but I do say that it was latent in that appeal to the human heart and conscience which primitive Christianity was. “Prove all things: hold fast that which is good.” So spake St. Paul, and preaching in the Areopagus to philosophers of various schools, to disciples, perhaps, of Aristotle or of Plato, as well as to disciples of Epicurus and of Zeno—the Apostle so far stood on the same ground with these that he recognised and courted full and free inquiry when he appealed to rational conviction on behalf of the faith which he proclaimed. And just as the spirit which animates the modern scientific inquirer is the

noble bequest of ancient Hellenic speculation, so the efforts of the liberal theologian in the Churches of the Reformation, in England, France, and Germany, to emancipate spiritual religion from its overgrowth of superstition, is in harmony with the essential principle of Christianity itself.

So far then, my brethren, as scepticism, whether ancient or modern, is simply inquiry, the doubt from which issues the search after truth, not only is it *not* what it has been rhetorically called, "a loaded shell flung into the fortress of the soul by its great enemy," but it is in the sphere of intellectual research an indispensable element of progress, and often enough in the spiritual life of the soul an agony which is close akin to faith. There is, however, something else; and you will not suspect me of taking back with the left hand what I have given with the right when I say, that doubt is a means, not an end, having no value for itself alone, and, whether in the realm of science or of religion, of service only, as the road which may lead to certainty. And it is owing to the fact that scepticism does often really imply something more than this that those who themselves shrink from inquiry have found some justification, both in ancient and in modern times, in giving scepticism a bad name. The doubt that is essential to investigation may pass from a mere negative and provisional attitude of

expectancy into a positive and permanent state of mind—may be changed from a means into an end, and become a mental habit quite as unfavourable to the discovery of truth as the most pronounced dogmatism. In this sense scepticism is a misfortune and may become a moral malady.

As examples of these two widely different things called by the same name, we may place side by side in the world of Greek speculation Socrates and Pyrrho of Elis. With Socrates, doubt was a means, not an end; with Pyrrho—from whom the word pyrrhonism as another name for universal scepticism came into vogue—doubt was in itself an end. Socrates made doubt the path to truth, Pyrrho made it the negation of all truth. Socrates sought that he might find, knocked at the door of truth that it might be opened to him: Pyrrho relinquished seeking, believed in no possibility of finding, and made doubt the resting-place and pillow of the soul. Let us hear the noble words that Plato¹ puts into the mouth of Socrates. “Some things I have said of which I am not altogether confident. But that we shall be better and braver and less helpless if we think that we ought to inquire, than we should have been if we indulged in the idle fancy that there was no knowing and no use in searching

¹ Meno. Jowett, i. 276.

after what we know not—that is a theme upon which I am ready to fight, in word and deed, to the utmost of my power.” From such a sentiment as this Pyrrho would have expressed his decided dissent. The line in which Byron has summed up the Socratic philosophy—

“Well didst thou speak, Athena’s wisest son,
‘All that we know is nothing can be known,’”—

quite misrepresents Socrates, but fits Pyrrho to the life. He did believe that “nothing could be known.” “We know nothing,” he said, “not even that we do not know anything,” and held that what are called first principles are self-contradictory and capable of establishing nothing. “A state of doubt,” said Diderot, “is a state of misery.” A state of doubt, believed Pyrrho, a perfect suspense of judgment, is a state of happiness. To quench all belief is to quench all desire, and thus to reach the blest repose of apathy. Wide indeed is the difference between the doubt of Socrates and the doubt of Pyrrho; and very wide, very strange and significant, too, was the difference between the personal fate and the moral influence of the two men. Socrates lived the life of an apostle, and was put to death as a heretic and a misleader of youth. Pyrrho lived and died in peace and esteem. But while Socrates initiated an intellectual and moral impulse which, across all the centuries, is felt still in

the world of to-day, and felt for good, not for evil, the influence of Pyrrho, though a negatively virtuous man himself, took away all motive to the acquisition of knowledge, all faith in virtue and goodness. Taught by him, men held that no God was necessary to explain the formation of the world—no evidence forthcoming of the existence of aught that is Divine. They held that nothing is just or unjust in itself, but that the distinction between good and evil depended solely upon human law and custom. And whatever may have been historically the speculative distinctions between the doctrines of Pyrrho and those of Epicurus,¹ the moral fruit of his teaching is seen in the later Epicureans—such as those who encountered St. Paul, who made the pleasure of the passing day the one sole end of life, and shut out all that is Divine from the world and from the heart of man.

No man who has attentively observed the currents of European thought in our own day, will deny the strong affinity between ancient and modern scepticism. The keen and restless inquiry after truth, which is the glory of the present age, yet leaves in many hearts and minds a fatal residuum of habitual doubt, stiffening into the creed that the truth which the spiritual

1 In speculative principles the two men differed widely. Epicurus was a dogmatist, and regarded Pyrrho as uninstructed and undisciplined (Diog. Laert., x. 4. 4). Epicurus was fond, however, of picking up anecdotes about Pyrrho (Diog. Laert., ix. 11. 5).

nature of man needs is utterly beyond his reach, and possibly has no existence.

I am not speaking now of that unthinking indifference to the problems of the universe which is content to let them pass as though they did not exist. Neither am I speaking of that scientific dogmatism which says curtly, "There is no God." The attitude of mind to which I refer is one which questions the existence of any rational postulates of religious belief, which says, sometimes defiantly, more often sorrowfully, "I have no means of knowing, and therefore I cannot believe." It is an attitude which is occasionally assumed with a mingled flippancy and arrogance by superficial minds, who rather imitate the doubts of deeper thinkers than sound the abyss of thought for themselves. Such persons resemble very closely the sceptical followers of Pyrrho. But it would be unfair to deny that there are many to whom doubt such as this is no luxury, no quiet resting-place, but a state of misery, the tossing on the restless wave beneath the starless midnight, the negation to which they feel themselves driven by the conviction that we cannot by searching find out God, or find any ground for believing that He is. While ancient scepticism questioned everything, denying the possibility of any real knowledge in any sphere whatever, modern scepticism, in this particular form of it, questions not, I think, at least not consciously, the ultimate prin-

ciples of reason, but the right of faith to build upon these a structure of religious belief. We are incapable, it says, of entertaining any reasonable conviction whatever about the Unknown and Unknowable Source of our being, or of what ought to be the attitude of mind and heart towards it. The only attitude which reason justifies is that of the entire absence of all belief, and of all affirmation about it.

And this purely intellectual character of much modern doubt is at once its strength and its weakness. It is its strength, rendering it so hard to dislodge, because considerations which are spiritual rather than purely intellectual, fall upon it like blunted arrows; and its weakness, because the spiritual nature of man will, I believe, in the ultimate issue, be too strong for modern as it was too strong for ancient scepticism. The individual, with his sorrows and with his doubts, we may leave with perfect trust in the hands of the living God, who comprehends those who comprehend not Him; but as a phase of human thought, I cannot think that nescience—the assertion that we can know nothing about the Divine—will be permanent, but it is, I apprehend, far more probable that it will divide into two streams, parting to the left and to the right into a more positive disbelief, or into a higher spiritual faith.

Yes, my hope for the religious future lies in the

development, in all their strength and purity, of the deeper spiritual faiths which have their well-spring in the heart of man—faiths which shall be directed, not extinguished, by knowledge. The fundamental error of modern scepticism is, I conceive, this, that our life, inner and outer, can ever be adequately guided by a purely intellectual reading of our own nature or of the universe which infolds us.

Every intellectual process whatever bases itself at last on faith, on some ultimate fact which it is compelled to assume as the ground and starting-point of all reasoning, without which the whole structure of reasoned truth fades like an unsubstantial pageant. We are compelled every day of our lives to act upon assumptions which we cannot verify, upon what is perhaps proveable, but not proved, on probability, which, as Bishop Butler has said, “is the very guide of life,” shaping our daily deeds and words by evidence not strictly conclusive, and yet, nine times out of ten, finding our trust justified by the issue. Rising above the levels of ordinary life, and looking out towards that Infinitude which encompasses the visible universe, this mental fact, which is the basis of science and the guide of life, takes the form of a religious faith, an apprehension of a Power of which things seen are the manifestation,—a sense of awe, of responsibility, of duty, a consciousness of dependence and of sin. And this sense of

religion, this faith springs out of the same root as intelligence itself, is twin-sister with it, and has a claim to be heard as we are striving to find the end and meaning of our being. Well and beautifully has it been said: "We cannot say that religion came upon earth, as some say America was peopled, by accident. It is there as the flowers are there which grow on the soil; it is there as the stars are in the heavens, shining in their perennial brightness; it is there by the ordination of that omnipotent nature from which all result. It grows as they grow; it blossoms in the heart as surely as those flowers upon the soil; it ripens in the character as surely as do the fruits of harvest in the fields. It belongs to nature; it belongs to humanity."¹

My brethren, it is so; and just as surely as our intelligence interprets the order of which we are a part, so surely does our spiritual nature bear witness to the Godhead whose offspring we are. At bottom, both this visible universe and its invisible Lord are past understanding. In its ultimate being, we cannot understand the tiniest flower that grows "in the crannied wall," how much less the Infinite Life from which it springs? Yet that Infinite Life belongs to faith, as its manifestations belong to intelligence.

¹ W. J. Fox, "The Religious Ideas," p. 19.

With the keen and glittering sword of intellect, scepticism would cut the living child in two and kill one-half of our nature. But man doth not live by intellect alone any more than he lives by bread alone. The reason of his understanding must be supplemented by the reason of his spirit and of his conscience. The law of duty written in our hearts, the awe inspired by the unfathomable depths of mystery on which our being is afloat, the influences of reverence, of sympathy, and of tenderness with which our souls are flooded,—these things it is which justify the conviction that there is that which corresponds and responds to them in the Infinite Power “in whom we live, and move, and have our being.” “Where mystery begins,” said a divine of the last century, “religion ends.” Rather say, “Where mystery is—and mystery is everywhere—*there* is religion.” Into the Holy of holies, treading with reverent feet, let the high priests of science by all means enter. It is to find, like the Roman conqueror in the Temple of Jerusalem, no visible Presence there, and yet to feel that there *is* a Presence, Eternal and Divine, which cannot be touched, or handled, or seen,—which cannot be reached by the subtlest processes of scientific analysis, or tested by the most delicate experiments, but which makes itself felt notwithstanding on the intellectual side of our nature as the universal causal agency, on the

spiritual side as the Fountain of all Beauty and of all Good.

Where the great shadow of Etna falls, in the early morning hour, all western Sicily is dark, while eastward every bay and headland is glittering in the light of the rising sun. But as the sun climbs the sky, the shadow lessens, and by and by all Sicily is gladdened by his rays. So will it yet be with the Sun of knowledge rising on the soul of man. It will not be for ever that light shall shine in the intellect, and the heart be left in the shadow of despair. And till this higher reconciliation of faith and knowledge shall come, our place and duty is bravely to trust even where we cannot know; and, though our feet stumble on the dark mountains before the morning is spread upon them, move onwards with unfailing heart, with our faces to the coming day.

VII.

THE EPICUREANS AND MODERN LIFE.

“Let us grant or imagine the Epicurean successful as he could wish in this enterprise of subduing religion; yet except therewith he can also trample down reason, new mould human nature, subjugate all natural appetites and passions, alter the state of things here and transform the world, he will yet in greatest part fail of his conceited advantages: very short he will fall of triumphing in a quiet and contented mind. . . . For he cannot be as a beast, or a mere sot, if he would: Reason, reflecting on present evils, and boding others future, will afflict him: his own unsatiable desires, unavoidable fears, and untameable passions will disquiet him.”—BARROW (*Works*, i. 23).

“Epicurus otii magister.”—PLINY (*Nat. Hist.*, xix. 4).

“Epicuri de grege porcum.”—HORACE (*Epist.* i. 4. 16).

“Ita non ab Epicuro impulsī luxuriantur, sed vitiis dediti, luxuriam suam in philosophiæ sinu abscondunt: et eo concurrunt, ubi audiunt laudari voluptatem. Nec æstimatur voluptas illa Epicuri . . . quam sobria et sicca sit: sed ad nomen ipsum advolant, quærentes libidinibus suis patrociniū aliquod ac velamentum. Itaque quod unum habebant in malis bonum, perdunt, peccandi verecundiam.”—SENECA (*De Vita Beata*, c. xii.).

VII.

“Certain philosophers of the Epicureans, and of the Stoics, encountered him. And some said, What will this babblers say?”—ACTS xvii. 18.

IN the year 323 before the Christian era, the year in which Alexander the Great died, there came to Athens, in the nineteenth year of his age, a youth, born of Athenian parents in the Isle of Samos. The name of this young man was Epicurus, founder of the sect of the Epicureans, some representatives of which, upwards of three centuries after the death of their master, listened with undisguised credulity and good-humoured mockery to the man who preached in Athens a faith which was destined to absorb the best elements in the teaching of their rivals the Stoics, and to suppress the public advocacy of their own.

Now, in spite of the personal character of Epicurus himself—which, according to all testimony, was that of a man whose own life was severely simple and frugal¹

¹ The tradition of this appears, for example, in the lines of Juvenal—

“—— Non Epicurum

“Suscepit exigui laetum plantaribus horti.”—*Satir.* xiii. 122, 123.

“Quantum, Epicure, tibi parvis suffecit in hortis.”—*Satir.* xiv. 319.

—and, in spite of the fact that he expressly dis-
countenanced every form of vice, and strove ear-
nestly to guard his teaching from abuse, it is not alto-
gether without reason that the word Epicurean has
become, in Christian as in Pagan times, a term of re-
proach. There is, of course, rank injustice in most
cases in making the teacher responsible for every use
or abuse of his teaching by his followers, and to some
extent Epicurus must be allowed the benefit of this
plea; for both in theory and in practice he was opposed
to animal indulgence in any form. At the same time
there is the fact, notorious in history, that his system
was thus abused, and, what is more to the purpose, that
the abuse grew naturally, however little he himself in-
tended or foresaw it, out of his main principle. It has
been observed that the real tendencies of a doctrine
are disclosed far more plainly in the men who adopt
than in the man who originates it. “It is impossible
to doubt,” says Mr. Lecky, “that Epicureanism was
logically compatible with a very high degree of virtue.
It is equally impossible to doubt that its practical
tendency was to vice.” It is sad to think that a man
whose own life was so pure, whose character was so
mild, who spent his days in teaching what he believed
to be the secret of happiness, who bore in his old age
with calmness and cheerfulness the painful disease of
which he died, whose immediate followers cherished

his memory with a tender enthusiasm, should have been the parent of a type of thought which has fostered, not checked, our native tendencies to selfish disregard of all but our own personal happiness—which, in its worst form, was made for something like four centuries the justification of a life of ignoble ease, and which was, in the age of St. Paul, “defiant of all religious principles, and a pander to every form of vice.”¹

What then *was* this doctrine of Epicurus which bore after his death fruit, “like the apples on the Dead Sea shore,” so fair without, so full within of bitter ashes?

Now, I do not think that I am misrepresenting the leading principle of the Epicurean theory of morality when I say that it made the culture of personal pleasure, and the avoidance of personal pain, the direct and immediate end of life. This view was closely connected with a materialistic theory of the universe, and a virtual negation of all theology. His system of nature Epicurus borrowed from earlier thinkers,—Empedocles and Democritus,—and is one which bears in its outward seeming a striking resemblance to the modern scientific view with which we have been of late years familiarised by constant discussion, namely, that this manifold order of things, ourselves included, is the result of the combination and variations of pri-

¹ Dr. James Donaldson, “Hist. of Christian Literature,” ii. 23.

mordial atoms. This physical theory—which I can only say in passing is, in the opinion of many deep thinkers, themselves men of science, by no means incompatible with the belief in an Infinite Power in the universe Divine and Eternal—was with Epicurus virtually atheistic. Epicurus did not indeed reject or deny the national gods of Athens, but he politely bowed them out of court. The gods of Epicurus were as good as none. They were themselves the products of the same material atoms as men. They were magnified Epicureans, who neither created nor ordered the world, who,—

“ — As they lie reclined,—

As they lie beside their nectar, careless of mankind—”

take no part in its government or interest in its affairs. The gods of Epicurus are—

“ — The gods who haunt

The lucid interspace of world and world,
Where never creeps a cloud or moves a wind,
Nor ever falls the least white-star of snow,
Nor ever lowest roll of thunder moans,
Nor sound of human sorrow mounts to mar
Their sacred everlasting calm.”

Considering what Greek and Italian mythology with all its outward grace and beauty really was, we Christians at least ought not to condemn Epicurus for banishing the gods from human life, nor be surprised that his far more earnest Roman disciple Lucretius

revolted with his whole soul against the sensualism, cruelty, and unreason of the national faith. But Epicurus made no distinction between superstition and religion. He never seems to have felt, as other sages of Greece felt, the haunting, overshadowing sense of Divinity, nor realised the existence of a Divine Law of righteousness which man did not create and which he cannot destroy.

And thus, my brethren, it was that the ethical theory of Epicurus was blended with no sense of reverential awe towards the Divine Infinitude, was based on no lofty conception of human destiny or duty, and was centred in man alone. "The Epicurean theory of virtue," says Mr. Bain, "is the type of all those who make an enlightened self-interest the basis of right and wrong." Enjoyment, rightly understood, was, according to Epicurus, the supreme end of life. Let us not be unjust. Let us judge the doctrine in its best form. The enjoyment which he inculcated was of that loftier type which shrinks from every grossness, "not debauchery to-day and satiety to-morrow, but equable enjoyment all the year round,"¹ and enjoyment too that consisted in refined mental pleasures,—demanding justice towards others, and the culture of friendship and of wisdom,—a happiness

¹ Lewes, "Biog. Hist. of Philosophy," p. 233.

which was only attainable by a virtuous frame of mind and course of life. In his own words, "Pleasure is the commencement and the end of good, but we cannot live in pleasure unless we live reasonably and rightly."¹ Such was the doctrine of Epicurus.

Well, if this be so, I can imagine some of my hearers saying, What fault have you to find? If this be the doctrine of Epicurus, where is the harm in Epicurean morality? What more would you have than happiness, sought and found by temperance, moderation, and justice? What else did St. Paul mean when he said, "Use the world as not abusing it. Let your moderation be known unto all men. The fruit of the Spirit is temperance?" Again I say, Let us not be unjust. As taught by Epicurus himself, and viewed merely as a practical rule under ordinary circumstances, his doctrine of pleasure has its uses and its measure of truth. Enjoyment of a rational kind is an element of human life, a cup to be sipped moderately and with thankfulness. No man is enamoured of pain. No man need kick aside pleasure as sinful or hurtful, when it clashes with no duty, when it does not cloud the conscience or enfeeble the will. Nay, more, pleasure in its place is helpful. We work better, we are more hopeful and more vigorous,

¹ Diog. Laert., x. 132.

when we are able to enjoy. And yet, admitting this most fully, I say that as an exhaustive theory of life the doctrine of Epicurus is unspeakably mischievous, and, as Platonist, Stoic, and Christian have believed, strikes at the root of all true nobility of soul.

The grand evil of the Epicurean creed is this: It makes each man his own centre,—places, if I may so speak, the moral centre of gravity in the pleasurable sensibility of the individual man,—makes himself, his own personal pains and pleasures, the pivot upon which turns the entire conduct of life. Do not confound Epicureanism with the doctrine which makes the pains and pleasures of the great sum of humanity, and not a man's own, the grand motive to right conduct. This theory may be insufficient, but it is compatible with the loftiest nobility of character, and claims for other than a personal end the denial and sacrifice of self. But the Epicurean system makes self the central fact. Do not misunderstand me. Self-regarding has its place as well as self-forgetting. There is scope for self-love as well as for self-sacrifice in the world and in the heart of man. Universal self-sacrifice would issue in utter absurdity. It is not the less true that egotism, selfishness, indifference to the rights of others, supreme regard to our own personal ease and comfort, are tendencies of our nature far stronger than the sympathy which places the good of

others side by side with our own. Epicureanism intensifies that part of our nature which is too strong as it is, makes self supreme, chimes in with our baser rather than with our better mind; and, instead of counterbalancing our too preponderant impulse to love self more than our neighbour and more than God, refers with a subtle sophistry to self all that surrounds us, as the whirlpool sucks into the abyss of waters everything which floats within its reach.

“By their fruits ye shall know them.” What have the Epicureans done for the higher life of humanity? In its best shape Epicureanism was little better than a prudent selfishness, in its worst it degenerated into vice. In St. Paul’s day, the Epicureans were like the Sadducees, the pleasure-loving men of the world, who adopted the principle but repudiated the example of their master. The physical philosophy of Epicurus produced the sublime poem of Lucretius, but, in the spirit and tone of his morality, in his austere and intense moral earnestness, Lucretius was far more of a Stoic than an Epicurean. The genial and pleasant Horace was an Epicurean, but the type of life which Horace preaches is lower than that of his teacher. Or, take as the representatives of the better class of Epicureans in Roman times, of men who understood how to seek pleasure in a refined, gentlemanly way, declining every public duty, and living a life of lettered

ease, Atticus, the friend of Cicero. Him Sir James Mackintosh has called in language not one whit too severe, "the accomplished, prudent, friendly, good-natured time-server, Atticus, the pliant slave of every tyrant, who could kiss the hand of Antony, imbrued as it was in the blood of Cicero."¹ No, Epicureanism at its best displays the lower, not the higher side of human nature,—connives at its frailty, and undermines its strength. It was not Epicureanism which made Athens, in her prime, the first-born of freedom, the nurse of heroism, intellect, and genius. It was not Epicureanism that built up the mighty fabric of Roman greatness. In the development of the Church, Epicureanism took no part except to stand aside and criticise or scoff. It is not Epicurean principles which have made England what she is. The history of the six centuries between Epicurus and Constantine furnishes proof more than enough that the doctrine of Epicurus, with its affirmation of pleasure and its negation of religion, was never meant for such a being as man is in such a world as this.

And yet, as an unconscious philosophy of life, as a subtle force of egotistic impulse ruling the man's being, Epicureanism exists still, plays its part in English society to-day as it did in Athens and Rome twenty

¹ "Dissertation on the Progress of Ethical Philosophy," p. 83.

centuries ago. Are there no young men now who are acting with more or less of distinct consciousness on the maxim, "Seek all the pleasure you can get, avoid all the pain"—who will shirk every duty which can possibly be shirked; who will not, if they know it, put their hand to any work demanding effort of brain or the shadow of self-denial; who saunter through life by the pleasantest path which they can find, with no thought of any high purpose, or care for much beyond themselves? Are there no older men, who look with cynical contempt upon all the questions, scientific, religious, economical, political, which agitate thinking minds, whose sole philosophy of life is to get through it with as little trouble to themselves, and as much ease and enjoyment as they can? Epicureanism, as a formal creed, may be, for aught I know, dead; as a practical end of life it is potent still; and where it is potent, it is potent for evil, stripping life of all its grandeur, in its best shape well-nigh useless to society; in its worst shape, mischievous; and as regards the individual man ruining the naturally loftier nature by the pervading influence of selfish and egotistical aims, plunging natures of a coarser fibre into habits of gross indulgence.

Most of my hearers will be familiar with that masterpiece of modern prose fiction, "*Romola*," and they will not fail to recall the character of Tito, de-

picted with a subtle analysis of the windings and turnings of the human heart, which lays it bare to our inspection like a piece of mechanism. The outward incidents of the story belong to a time and a land more picturesque than our own; the inner life delineated is as true now as then, in the England of to-day as in the Florence of the fifteenth century. And the moral of this picture of Tito Melema lies, not in the vivid story of his outward fortunes, or in the poetical justice and the tragic suddenness of his death, but in the unfolding, step by step, of the deterioration of a bright and gifted nature through the preference of what is pleasant to what is right. The words "I ought" and "I ought not" have vanished, as Mr. Maurice observes, from Tito's vocabulary. There comes to this young Greek, whose only fault at first is his tendency to "make life easy to himself, to carry his human lot, if possible, in such a way that it should pinch him nowhere," and "to extract the utmost sum of pleasure" from the world, there comes to Tito the occasion which comes, in some shape, to most men, when he is called to make deliberate choice between pleasure and duty; when he is grasped by the importunate thought of a right and a wrong, and "is obliged to pause and decide whether he will surrender and obey, or whether he will give the refusal that must carry irrevocable consequences." And young men and women will do

well to ponder this, that so surely as, like Tito, they make self-gratification, not conscience, the law of their life, so surely will moral deterioration follow,—God's judgment on selfishness not the less real, because it takes place within, where no eye beholds it but God's.

Let us now look at "the dregs of Epicurus"—at a somewhat coarser type of modern Epicurean life. I will again venture to borrow my illustration from the world of fiction, not the less belonging for all that to the world of real life, allowing for the novelist's right somewhat to heighten the picture. Mr. Anthony Trollope shall describe to us the character of Colonel Marrable:—"He was one of those men who, through their long, useless, ill-flavoured lives, always contrive to live well, to eat and drink of the best, to lie softly, and to go about in purple and fine linen, and yet never have any money. . . . To lie, to steal,—not out of tills or pockets, because he knew the danger,—to cheat, . . . to indulge every passion, though the cost to others might be ruin for life; to know no gods but his own bodily senses, and no duty but that which he owed to those gods; to eat all and produce nothing; to love no one but himself; to have learned nothing but how to sit at table like a gentleman; to care not at all for his country or even for his profession; to have no creed, no party, no friend, no conscience, to be troubled

with nothing that touched his heart; such . . . was . . . the life of Colonel Marrable." "Perhaps," observes the novelist, "it was accounted to this man as a merit by some that he did not quail at any coming fate . . . He never asked himself whether he had aught even to regret before he died or to fear afterwards." "There are many Colonel Marrables about in the world, known well to be so at clubs, in drawing-rooms, and by the tradesmen who supply them. Men give them dinners, and women smile upon them. The best of coats and boots are supplied to them. They never lack cigars or champagne. They have horses to ride and servants to wait upon them, more obsequious than the servants of other people. And men will lend them money too, well knowing that there is no chance of repayment. Now and then one hears a horrid tale of some young girl who surrenders herself to such an one, absolutely for love. Upon the whole, the Colonel Marrables are popular."¹

The picture, it will be said, is overcharged. It may be so. I know too little of the world it describes to vouch for the verisimilitude of every detail. But true in spirit and substance it is, and such ruined, wasted lives are the outcome of the choice or bent which makes us "lovers of pleasure more than lovers of

¹ "The Vicar of Bullhampton," pp. 208, 209.

God,"—which tramples on conscience for the gratification of self. Some ideal of life loftier than that of the Epicurean is surely needed in this world, some end and purpose which embraces a wider scope than personal interest or personal pleasure. We, in the England of this hour, and those of us especially who are born and nurtured in the luxurious middle class, ought to recognise the need of subordinating this imperious craving to make life comfortable and easy, to some higher idea of our destiny, to some truer aim of our existence. And here in this age and land, an ideal of life and type of character, unknown to Epicurus and to Athens, are subsisting still—of One, the spirit of whose earthly career is summed up in the words, "Lo, I come to do Thy will, O God;" "the Son of Man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give His life a ransom for many"—who, neither refusing pleasure nor making light of pain, held loyalty to God and love to man to be better than pleasure, to be cherished in spite of pain—who, from the throne of His cross, has created an ideal of life which neither Epicurean nor Stoic knew, and who has penetrated the world with a Divine power to conquer the selfish instincts, and to spread in ever-widening circles the rippling sympathies of love.

VIII.

THE STOICS AND MODERN THOUGHT.

"All the facts of consciousness, all the marvels of thought remain, whatever changes may take place in our theories respecting them."
—LEWES (*Problems of Life and Mind*, i. 158, 159).

"There are some truths in regard to which we are not warranted to ask the why. They shine in their own light; and we feel that we need no light; and we ask no light wherewith to see them."
—M'COSH (*Intuitions of the Human Mind*, p. 385).

"Should it be asserted that religious ideas are products of the religious sentiment . . . the problem is not solved, but only removed further back. . . . Whence comes the sentiment? . . . Any theory of things which takes no account of this attribute must be extremely defective."
—HERBERT SPENCER (*First Principles*, p. 15).

"Philosophy is based on the affirmation of God's existence, and not upon the denial of it."
—FISKE (*Cosmic Philosophy*, ii. 377).

"Ψυχὴν σώματος ἀναγκαιότερον ἰᾶσθαι τοῦ γὰρ ζῆν κακῶς τὸ τεθνάναι κρείσσον,"—EPICTETUS (*Fragment*, xcii.; *Didot*, p. 24).

"Mundum autem censent [Stoici] regi numine Deorum, eumque esse quasi communem urbem et civitatem hominum et Deorum."
—CICERO (*De Finibus*, iii. 19).

VIII.

“Certain philosophers of the Epicureans, and of the Stoics, encountered him.”—ACTS xvii. 18.

THE Epicureans and the Stoics may be regarded as the representatives of two types of human nature, of those who take life easily, and of those who take it seriously. In an age of sceptical weariness and of profound superstition, an age of utter demoralisation, overshadowed by imperial despotism, the Stoics appear as endowed with the loftiest spirit of ideal excellence, as martyrs of freedom, and shining examples of manly independence, living lives of heroic virtue under every discouragement. In the same period of declining Hellenic life, the fourth and third centuries before Christ, in which Epicurus preached his doctrine of pleasure, Zeno taught his doctrine of resignation. “His life corresponded to his precepts,” was the epitaph inscribed on the tomb of the founder of the philosophy of the Stoics; and for many generations the disciples were, upon the whole, worthy of their master. In the lifetime of St. Paul especially, Roman Stoicism at least afforded proof that the old Roman spirit of moral

austerity was not yet dead, while it displayed an intellectual culture to which the men of the earlier commonwealth were strangers.

You will, of course, readily understand, that, in saying this, I do not mean to deny that there were grave deficiencies in both the theory and practice of the Stoical schools. It is a remark of Emerson, scarcely intended, I should think, to be taken with literal strictness: "Every Stoic was a Stoic; but in Christendom, where is the Christian?" But the wheat never springs up without the tares springing with it. Every Stoic was *not* a Stoic any more than every Christian is a Christian. In the philosophy of the Porch, as in the Christian Church, were unworthy professors, men who were Stoics only because they wore the philosopher's cloak, and had plaster-casts of the founder in their rooms. It is not the less true that, taking it for all in all, the Stoical philosophy was, next to Christianity, one of the grandest protests against the disorder and wickedness of the world that was ever made.

The Stoical theory of morality was at the very opposite pole to that of Epicurus. While the system of Epicurus made the individual man himself, his pains and pleasures, the moral centre of life and the supreme motive of action, the Stoics looked outside the man to the order of which he is a part, and placed

the end of his being in obedience to that order. The Stoical system, to borrow the language of Mr. Lecky, "taught that our reason reveals to us a certain law of nature, and that a desire to conform to this law, irrespective of all considerations of reward or punishment, of happiness or the reverse, is a possible and sufficient motive of virtue." Thus, while the practical aim of the Epicurean was to secure all the pleasure, and avoid all the pain which can possibly be secured or avoided, the attitude of the Stoic towards pleasure and pain was that of a certain noble, though often enough impracticable, contempt and defiance.

Stoical orthodoxy professed to regard pain as no evil, and pleasure as no good. Placing virtue in the conduct of life in harmony with the order of nature, and subjecting the individual to the whole of which he is a part, the Stoical philosophy theoretically excluded every personal end—excluded pleasure, above all, as lowering the moral energy, and cutting the sinews of exertion. Such a theory was, of course, an exaggeration of the nobler instincts and promptings of great souls, and certainly was not the whole truth about our relation to the universe. But though truth lies between two extremes, it does not, as Niebuhr observes, always lie in the middle; and undoubtedly the Stoics were nearer to the truth than the Epicureans. In seeking outside themselves the law which should guide

their life; in subordinating personal ends to obedience to the eternal order; in meeting the evils of our mortal lot with resignation, patience, and self-sacrifice, who will deny that the Stoics, with all their exaggeration and defects, held a nobler ideal, and lived a truer life than those who busied themselves mainly about making existence pleasurable? It has been said that "there was a presentiment of Rome in Zeno's breast." We may go further, and say that there was a presentiment in Zeno of the Christian Church and of Him who said, "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness." "He that findeth his life shall lose it; and he that loseth his life for My sake shall find it."

The ethical theory of the Stoics, then, may be summed up as consisting in the subordination of our instinctive love of pleasure, and instinctive shrinking from pain to obedience to the moral order revealed in the world. What, however, is most remarkable and most instructive is this, that this ethical theory, "whose very failings leaned to virtue's side," the defects and exaggerations of which sprang from the ardent longing to reach spiritual perfection through knowledge of the laws of the universe and by stern obedience to them, was based upon a purely materialistic theory of the whole frame of things, and upon the recognition in every department of nature of the reign of law. The Stoical

system of thought was, in its speculative aspect, simple materialism, and yet it is matter of fact, past all question, that this materialism was compatible with a profound and intense moral earnestness, and, in the late Stoics, with a devout religious spirit springing out of the consciousness of a Divine Reason penetrating all Nature. And I cannot but think that this fact has a lesson for ourselves; that, on the one hand, it may well reassure those who contemplate with dismay the progress of thought in the scientific interpretation of the universe, as though advancing knowledge must strip it of its divineness, and, on the other hand, check the premature exultation of some who seem to think that all religion is doomed to perish, consumed by the spirit, and destroyed by the brightness of science. On the contrary, it seems to me that this chapter in the history of the human mind is one of many proofs that religion in the soul of man is indestructible, and that it can flourish in an intellectual climate apparently the most unfavourable. Man's conception of the Divine changes with the changing light of knowledge, as his thoughts are narrowed or widened in the circles of the suns, but his sense of some Divine Thing in which "he lives and moves and has his being," cannot be swept away by any incoming flood of new ideas about the order through which the Infinite Power is manifested. The new ideas may, for a season, eclipse

the faith, but it is only for a season, and faith reasserts itself in the world of new ideas.

Look, then, my brethren, at the facts. Widely sun-dered—nay, separated by a whole hemisphere of thought—as were the Epicureans and the Stoics in their theory of human life, both were materialistic in their speculative conception of the universe. If Epicurus, following in the wake of earlier thinkers, built up the system of things from the combinations and variations of primordial atoms, the Stoics adopted the idea of Heracleitus, who derived all things from a primitive element of “fire.” In the opinion, indeed, of Mr. Grote, “the fire meant by Heracleitus was only symbolical of the universal process of destruction and renovation.” But there can be no doubt that the Stoical fire was distinctly physical. The whole universe—earth, stars, the mind of man, gods, and the souls of heroes—all was material. The human mind was the product of the impressions made by external objects—had, in fact, no existence whatever apart from those impressions, and independent of them. God was in the primæval fire-mist out of which all has proceeded—from which all things have been developed according to fixed immutable laws under the guidance of an all-pervasive principle, active everywhere, a Divine Reason working in and through this universal frame of things. No physical theory could well be more

distinctly materialistic than the Stoical, and yet the fact is indisputable that this system of thought recognised in its own way the presence of Divinity in nature, and was compatible with a purity of morals, a high ideal of life, a contempt of death, a resignation to inevitable evils, a "patience sovereign o'er transmuted ill," second only in their sublime spiritual energy to early Christianity itself. And this, in my judgment, is a fact of far reaching significance for ourselves.

Of the intense moral earnestness and real religious devotion of the Stoical, not less than of the Platonic, schools of philosophy in the first century of the Christian era, I have already spoken in a previous sermon. I advert now simply to the fact. Let us hear on this point a few words of Archbishop Trench: "The Stoic Porch," he says, "was, in some sort, the noblest school of philosophy in the ancient world, and had never shown itself so nobly as in those evil times. . . . It had then been seen what this philosophy . . . could arm men to do and, still more, to suffer. When all was base and servile elsewhere, it was the last refuge and citadel of freedom."¹ Yes, Stoicism was the Church militant of Paganism, with its "noble army of martyrs," with its saintly lives, and its confessors of

¹ "Lectures on Plutarch," p. 92. In what follows I am largely indebted to M. Ernest Havet, "*Le Christianisme et ses Origines*," ii. 254, et seq.

truth. Lord Macaulay, in his "Essay on Lord Bacon," sneers at such philosophy as useless, unpractical, and utopian. A very pitiful and shallow sneer this, as it seems to me,—a sneer which could be directed with equal force against Christianity.¹ Neither St. Paul nor Zeno has given us science, but both in their own place have helped suffering human beings, who had fallen on evil days, to live saintly and heroic lives. The Stoics bore with silent endurance the evils of nature which they knew not how to cure, but, in the presence of human wickedness, armed with tyrannical might, they rose up in moral protest and defiance. Those paradoxes about pain and death being no evil were the contempt which lofty souls felt for Tiberius or Caligula or Nero, were the protest of conscience against brute force. Such men as Annæus Cornutus, as Helvidius Priscus, as Pætus and his wife Arria, as Musonius Rufus, and others who dared look the masters of many legions in the face, and tell them that their works were not good but evil, who could say, "It is for you to kill, it is for us to die."—"You can torture or slay, but you cannot injure"—such men who, in their protest against tyranny, baseness, and vice, "loved not their lives unto the death," deserve

¹ I was not sorry to find that Sir G. C. Lewis, speaking of this essay, says, "His remarks on the ancient philosophy are for the most part shallow and ignorant in the extreme" ("Letters," p. 93).

to have their names registered on the bead-roll of Christian martyrs. This high-flown language about contempt of suffering and death, which sounds to us somewhat stilted and extravagant, appears as a very different thing when we remember that these men held their lives in their hands, just as Garat, who had read Seneca in his youth and thought his morality unreal, read him again in prison during the Reign of Terror, and found that it was a morality that inspired fortitude and courage when the guillotine was hanging over his head.”¹

Nor were the Stoics so wholly visionary and unpractical as their paradoxical language seems to imply. Stoical orthodoxy, like every other orthodoxy, was greatly modified in practice, with amiable inconsistency, letting in through the window the human sympathies against which, in theory, they had shut the door. With a view of the Divine nature, which in strictly logical form was that of a wholly impersonal deity, many of them contrived to blend faith in a Providence, in a moral government of the world, in a future state, and to cherish a devout mystical contemplation of the Supreme holiness of the One Spirit of the universe; as Seneca, for example, who speaks of God as having neither head nor heart,

¹ Havet, ii. 256, 257.

when he comes to use language of consolation or exhortation writes like a Christian divine.

I repeat, then, here was a materialistic creed compatible with some sort of belief in a Divine Ruler of men, and with a profound moral and religious earnestness. I need hardly say that the creed of materialism in any shape is not my own, but the facts which I have now indicated are brought forward to illustrate the position that the moral and spiritual nature of man is too strong to be suppressed even by a materialistic interpretation of the universe. As I have said before, so I say again, whatever may become of the human moulds in which theology has been cast, religion in the soul of man, God's witness for Himself, will survive, however profoundly scientific research may change our conceptions of the order of nature.

Now, many of my hearers are perfectly familiar with the fact of how mighty a change has come over educated thought within the last twenty or even ten years in the conception of natural order. The views of ancient thinkers like Democritus and Heracleitus were marvellous foreshadowings of the discoveries of our own age, but still were rather the product of speculative genius than built upon inductive reasoning. It is not so now. The facts upon which modern science builds, and many of the deductions drawn

from those facts can only be questioned by those who should do as the opponents of Galileo did,—shut their eyes when asked to look for themselves through his telescope at Jupiter's moons. The facts are here whether we acknowledge them or not; and it is as Pascal said of Galileo's doctrine of the movement of the earth: If it does really turn, the whole conclave of cardinals cannot prevent it turning, nor themselves turning with it. And in general terms the affirmation of modern thought is this: It sees in all things the evolution of being from lower to higher forms,—it blends the world of matter and the world of mind into one complex, intricate harmony,—it recognises everywhere the reign of law, excluding all capricious interferences,—it comprehends all things past and present in one mighty organic whole. There are, no doubt, gaps in the evidence,¹ and the mystery which lies beyond all this cannot be grasped; but even reluctant thinkers are compelled, by overwhelming cogency of proof in some departments, by highest

¹ These gaps are in fact very serious. I state, upon good scientific authority, that no proof is forthcoming of the origin of life from inorganic matter, or of the origin of man from some "ape-like creature" (Darwin). I may add that in the region of psychology I have been unable to find any conclusive explanation of the origin of consciousness in the nervous organism, or any valid proof of the affirmation that the will is *wholly* determined by antecedent psychical states. Let the reader compare Herbert Spencer ("Principles of Psychology," vol. i. p. 42, *et seq.*, and p. 500, *et seq.*) with Kirkman ("Philosophy without

probability in others, to form this conception of the order of nature.

Is this, then, materialism? Is what we call matter the root out of which all things spring? It is impossible to say this, unless we enlarge our definition of matter and include within it all the marvels of life and mind. No doubt there have been and are men, who, dwelling largely on the physical side of nature and the physiological side of man, have lost all faith in the Divine aspects of nature and in the spiritual destiny of man. This cannot be denied. Yet even materialism need not necessarily be atheistic. To quote the words of an eminent thinker, who has closely studied the relations of body and mind: "The imputation of materialism, which ought never to have been so lightly made, it is quite certain that the majority of scientific men would earnestly disclaim. Moreover, the materialist, as such, is not under any logical constraint whatever, to deny either the existence of God or the immortality of the soul or free will."¹ And I go yet

Assumptions," c. xi. 188, *et seq.*). I say this because I believe that it is more than ever incumbent upon us to bear in mind the wise caution against treating hypothesis as fact, which Dr. Virchow has urged in a spirit certainly not unfriendly to science ("Freedom of Science in the Modern State," 1878, Eng. tr.). But were every gap in the evidence for evolution filled up, my own faith in the Divine source from which the process emanates, and by whose Infinite Life it is a process at all, would remain unshaken, and my faith in human destiny under Divine guidance no whit impaired. Evolution explains *everything* and explains *nothing*.

¹ Maudsley, "Body and Mind," p. 322.

further and say, what is known to many who hear me, that, in the deeper philosophy of the age, the materialistic hypothesis is held to be utterly inadequate; that mind and matter are regarded merely as names for two series of phenomena, in ultimate analysis alike incomprehensible, and, it may be, springing out of some higher unity which is different from both.¹ All science only conducts us at last to the shores of that "immortal sea which brought us hither," to the depths and heights, the length and breadth of the Infinitude which surrounds us; and still as of old may the question be asked, "Canst thou by searching find out God? Canst thou find out the Almighty to perfection? It is high as heaven; what canst thou do? deeper than hell; what canst thou know?"

My brethren, it is so. We cannot comprehend, under any formula which human intellect can grasp, or human language frame, the Infinite and Eternal Spirit. Yet, the highest thought of this age recognises the fact that there is a reality other than the things which we touch and see; and corresponding to this intellectual affirmation, is the witness for the Divine reality which is found in the essentially religious nature of man. Professor Tyndall has spoken of "the

¹ See Herbert Spencer, "First Principles," pp. 557-559. Also "Mind," No. x., April 1878, p. 205; and Maguire, "The Platonic Idea," c. ix. "Immortality."

wonderful plasticity of the theistic idea which enables it to maintain, through many changes, its hold upon superior minds." Yes, for the idea of God corresponds to that which is deepest in the soul of man, where He reveals Himself in spiritual intuitions which cannot be shaped into perfectly adequate thoughts, still less syllabled in words, but which are real and true notwithstanding. And so far as the past is concerned, we have evidence forthcoming that the religious element does not succumb to the intellectual, but is for ever adapting itself to altered conditions of thought, and yet remains a living thing. Stoicism, in many educated minds, replaced polytheism, replaced scepticism, replaced total unbelief in the Divine. Christianity replaced Stoicism. The Stoics preached, and, to some extent, lived out a theory of life of surpassing grandeur. The Stoic philosophy contended at great odds with that which was worse than itself; it yielded only to that which was better. "Christianity," as Edmund Burke has said, "humanised the idea of Divinity." It met human needs with a higher revelation of the Divine nature, and a fuller and therefore truer type of manhood than the Stoics knew. It touched the heart of man to finer issues, kindling a loftier enthusiasm as it presented the matchless life and perfect offering of Jesus of Nazareth. It realised the city of God, of which the Stoic only dreamed, drawing together into

one brotherhood by its "sovereign legend of pity," and its proclamation of the fatherly love of God towards all mankind—the slave and the outcast, the ignorant and the lettered, women and children, the bond and the free. That revelation of God through the highest type of man corresponds to our deepest spiritual needs; and though even the highest type of manhood can give us but a partial disclosure of the infinite depths of Godhead,¹ it gives us all that it seems possible to give here, making aspiration and trust the forces that impel our lives, while our souls, like those who watch for the morning, look out for the perfect day.

¹ John xiv. 28: "My Father is greater than I." "Minor Patre secundum Humanitatem."—*Quicunque Vult.*, sect. 31. "Which," says Waterland, "needs no comment."—"Critical History of the Athanasian Creed," p. 175. "Dangerous it were for the feeble brain of man to wade far into the doings of the Most High; Whom, although to know, be life, and joy to make mention of His name; yet our soundest knowledge is to know that we know Him not as indeed He is, neither can know Him: and our safest eloquence concerning Him is our silence, when we confess without confession that His glory is inexplicable, His greatness above our capacity and reach. He is above, and we upon earth; therefore it behoveth our words to be wary and few."—HOOKER ("Ecclesiastical Polity," Book I. vol. i. p. 149. Oxford, 1845).

IX.

HUMANITY AND GOD.

"We feel that we are greater than we know."—WORDSWORTH.

"False ideas may be refuted indeed by argument, but by true ideas alone are they expelled."—JOHN HENRY NEWMAN (*Apolo-
gia*, p. 48).

"It is not science in the narrow sense which can order our be-
liefs, but philosophy; not science which can solve our problems of
life, but religion. And religion demands for its understanding the
religious mind and the spiritual experience."—F. HARRISON (*Nine-
teenth Century*, June 1877, p. 631).

"Ἀλλὰ μὴν καὶ ἀνθρώπου γε ψυχὴ ἣ εἶπερ τι καὶ ἄλλο τῶν ἀνθρω-
πίνων τοῦ θείου μετέχει, ὅτι μὲν βασιλεύει ἐν ἡμῖν φανερόν, ὁράται δὲ
οὐδ' αὐτή. Ἄ χρὴ κατανοοῦντα μὴ καταφρονεῖν τῶν ἀοράτων, ἀλλ' ἐκ
τῶν γιγνομένων τὴν δύναμιν αὐτῶν καταμανθάνοντα τιμᾶν τὸ δαιμόνιον."
SOCRATES (*Xenoph. Memorab.*, iv. 3, 14).

"L'homme n'est qu'un roseau pensant . . . Quand l'univers l'é-
craserait, l'homme serait encore plus noble que ce qui le tue, parce-
qu'il sait qu'il meurt: et l'avantage que l'univers a sur lui, l'univers
n'en sait rien."—PASCAL (*Pensées*, i. iv. 6).

"The worship the heart lifts above
And the heavens reject not:
The desire of the moth for the star,
Of the night for the morrow,
The devotion to something afar
From the sphere of our sorrow."

—SHELLEY.

"—— ἐπεὶ καὶ τοῦτον ὁῖομαι ἀθανάτοισιν
εὐχεσθαι· πάντες δὲ θεῶν χατέουσ' ἀνθρώποι."

HOMER (*Odys.*, iii. 47, 48).

IX.

“For we are also His offspring.”—ACTS xvii. 28.

WHAT, then, does this brief chapter of human history say to us about the nature of man? and has it any witness to the nature of God?

Are we in truth only “such stuff as dreams are made of,” and is our “little life rounded with a sleep?” Does each consciousness, born of death, sink into death again as its quick course on earth runs out? Is this mighty order of things infolded by no Infinite Life, governed by no Supreme Mind? and has it but a little longer date than ourselves, speeding onward to the inevitable day when “nor human spark is left, nor glimpse divine,” when death

“—— Great Anarch lets the curtain fall
And universal darkness buries all”?

So men are thinking and saying in these times.¹
If what they say is true, then something else is true

¹“We have thus reached the beginning as well as the end of the present visible universe, and have come to the conclusion, that it began in time, and will in time come to an end.” “Death will ultimately overtake the race just as remorselessly as the individual.”—“The Unseen Universe,” pp. 93, 152. “The evolution of man . . . is . . . but an inevitable result of a vast chain of antecedent events, not provably elaborated

also. Man is greater than his destiny, and is the living lie whose veriest delusions are nobler than the truth, whose trusts and aspirations laugh to scorn the cruel irony of his fate.

For as we stand with St. Paul on the Areopagus, the vision which meets us is, with all its shadows, a vision of human greatness. It is a vision of life on this earth, clothed with a vesture of beauty, the outward glory of which is the weak symbol of "the faculty divine" which has shaped it. It is a vision of keen intellect questioning with inexhaustible and eager solicitude the mystery of the Infinite, and of natures, impelled by an insatiable thirst for knowledge, consumed by a passion of unfulfilled longings, ever striving to break through the earthly environment, ever striving to rise through sensuous symbols to the Spiritual and the Divine. We see men who cannot rest either in superstition or unbelief, passing from the one to the other in turn, or flinging off both, in search for a Supreme Good. We see men, whose investigation of truth becomes lighted up with emotion, born of reverence for things Divine—men, whose sceptical uncertainties, ever renewed, yet

under supreme guidance, but probably simply from that uncalculating necessity of consequence inherent in the very existence of matter."—R. H. EYTON, "The *Æsthetics of Physicism*, Westminster Review," No. 84, Oct. 1872, p. 445. "Man . . . at death . . . returns to the same condition of nothingness, as far as consciousness is concerned, as was the case prior to his embryonic existence."—ROBERT LEWINS, M. D. ("Life and Mind," p. 13).

never satisfying, seek the certitude which eludes them—men, who spurn indolent acquiescence in the things which are seen even when despairing of attaining the things which are *not* seen, who scorn to eat, drink, and be merry, because to-morrow they die, who can find no home or resting-place in earthly enjoyment, who summon up lofty ideas of an impracticable virtue, who are ready to fling away life rather than be consciously false to truth, or become the slaves of baseness. And, rising high above all this brilliant picture of art and heroism and intellect and moral earnestness and intensity of spiritual longing comes the story, falling from Jewish lips, of a life which is the crown of all lives, of a death which fitly consummated the life, and of an immortal hope dawning upon all mankind.

The truth, then, which is written on this page of history is, that men are impelled by forces which suggest an origin and a destiny quite other than earthly. The inquiring intellect, the high purpose, the restless dissatisfaction, the scorn of baseness, and the hatred of lies which we have seen in battle with their opposites are elements in the history of our race which will not fit interpretations of the universe which shut out God. "Whether man be *from* the brutes or not, he is assuredly not *of* them."¹ He looks before and after and

¹ Huxley, "Man's Place in Nature," pp. 109, 110.

pires for what is not." He has religious sentiments and religious ideas—under what conditions evolved makes no difference—and whether we call them delusions or not, they are none the less facts as parts of his own nature. As he rises in the scale of being, he reaches forth after the Eternal and the Infinite. Facts like these claim answer to the questions, Whence, and Whither, and Why? In some shape or other, men have always answered these questions—from God, and to God. All mythologies, all religions, almost all philosophies, even those which, in revolt against popular faiths, have sought, by negation of God, to sound the abyss of being, are blind gropings in the dark after the unfathomable secret, are indications of the persistence in human souls of this sense of the Infinite and the Divine.

Now, to trace back this ineradicable consciousness to the dreams and shadows which haunted and terrified primitive men¹ is to unfold its history; it is not to explain its root. As it has been well said, "Dogs also have shadows and dreams, and nothing much has come of it."² Man *was* a living soul before he could have had any *idea* of a soul at all, and it is that selfhood of his which has given to shadows, echoes, and

¹ Herbert Spencer, "Principles of Sociology," vol. i. c. x. *et seq.*

² Rev. Baldwin Brown.

dreams all their significance. Vainly did early Greek speculation strive to break loose from mythology, and explain "the things which are seen as made from things that do appear." Precious as science is, there is something more precious still: and Socrates brought man back to the study of himself, Plato to the contemplation of the Infinite. It is idle to complain that barren questions about the origin of things thrust out rational investigation, that the disputes of metaphysicians and theologians nipped in the bud the physical research of the Alexandrian Schools. Wasted efforts of intellects, perhaps, such questions were. Blurred pages in the history of the human mind it is possible that they are. But one thing, at least, they teach us, man's reaching after the Eternal, the restless seeking of his soul after God.

No. It is of very little use warning us off the domain of the Invisible, telling us, in the interests of what we can touch and see, that past altar and through church and temple is no avenue, and that man :

"Such splendid purpose in his eyes,
But rolls the psalm to wintry skies,
And builds him fanes of fruitless prayer."

Men might, perhaps, worship more wisely, but worship in some shape they will. It is of very little use reiterating with passionate insistence that the supernatural, if by that is meant the Divine Source of all

being, is a mere illusion, or that theological thought is a cloudland in which men have mapped out mere streaks of vapour, mistaking them for solid continents and islands. Souls which know that they are alive will continue to feel after God, and find Him in spite of all.

See for a moment how this matter stands. In these times, as in the time of Seneca and of St. Paul, thought finds itself by its own confession hemmed in on every side by Infinitude. The great thinker to whom even those who dissent from him most widely will acknowledge how much they owe, is compelled by his loyalty to truth to commence his work on "Synthetic Philosophy" by seeking the reconciliation of religion and science, by bowing with religious reverence before the mystery of an Unknowable Power.¹ Auguste Comte supplements his positive philosophy with a positive religion, and the disciple who refuses to follow his master from the lecture-hall into the temple, even *he* is awed as he gazes on the eternal ocean which beats upon the shores of our lives, for which we have neither bark nor sail, but the clear vision of which is as salutary as it is formidable.² And for my own part, I know of few things more pathetic than the earnest and

¹ Herbert Spencer, "First Principles." Part i.

² Littré, "Paroles de Philosophie Positive," apud "Revue des Deux Mondes," prem. livr., Sept. 1869.

eloquent pleading of Comte's English interpreter,¹ for a spiritual religion—pleading so truly Christian in its tone and spirit even while rejecting Christian ideas, and echoing so much of Christian aspiration though having no part or lot in Christian belief. It is vain. You cannot thrust religion out of the heart. If it be a dream, it is a dream that is of mightier power than waking life. But it is *not* a dream. It is the profoundest reality of our nature—the impulse at bottom of all intellectual questionings, the spring of noble lives, the cry of humanity to its invisible Lord. And still the question recurs: What is the origin, what is the meaning of this religious consciousness? and yet as of old the answer comes, Religion is of God; witness through all its aberrations to the Spirit who is other than the visible universe—Who is the Guide and End of our destiny.

I know of course that it will be said, What is the evidence that this answer is the true one? How can we certainly know that the universe is Divine, the indwelling of an Infinite Spirit, under the government of a living Mind? Well, if by evidence is meant such evidence as can be drawn out and tendered in a law court, then I admit that there is none. Such evidence fails—but fails by the very nature of the case. It is

¹ Frederick Harrison in the "Nineteenth Century," for June 1877.

not by demonstration that the finite soul can apprehend the soul of the universe. But though we cannot transcend our faculties, we can trust them. Though we cannot reason out the existence of God, we can feel it. And this consciousness of the Divine is revelation, the unveiling of the heavenly light to the mind, carrying with it its own evidence, as surely as sunlight is a physical revelation to the eye. Men tell us that the eye is itself a product of the light, the adaptation through successive variations of the sentient organism to its environment. We do not dispute it. But neither can we doubt that the spiritual organ too is the product of the spiritual light, having its own adaptation to the Divine reality, and to that reality owing its very existence. The witness of God's Spirit with our spirits, that we are the children of God—offspring of a parent Mind, not products of a dead, soulless universe, is no delusion, no dream, no superstition, but a revelation to the soul fitted to apprehend it as real as that revelation of unity of law, and unity of order, which is made to our intelligence through outward things. Far more incredible is it that a lifeless universe should have produced living souls, than that life should have its origin in life, and thought in an eternal thought akin to its own.¹

¹See "Chips from a German Workshop," i. Pref. x., and "Lectures on the Science of Religion," pp. 18-20, by Professor Max Müller, whose

Once more, then, we turn to St. Paul in Athens as he stands in the midst of that brilliant throng of thinkers and wits, and pleasure-seekers, and devotees of native or of foreign creeds, as he seeks to pierce, by the power of his own earnest soul, to the deep heart of humanity. And, as it has ever been God's way with us, to bring home His Word to feebler souls through mightier and more gifted ones, so here, in the highest historical manifestation of Himself through His beloved Son, came the message of eternal life to men. Those ideas of unchanging significance, of perennial moral fruitfulness which are summed up under the sacred terms Incarnation, Resurrection, Eternal Judgment, and Communion of the Holy Spirit—just indicated in St. Paul's address to the Athenians, but everywhere penetrating his letters—have struck deep root in the nature of man, and made a new epoch in his history.

"We are the offspring of God." In confirmation of this statement St. Paul appeals to certain of their own poets, to Cleanthes and Aratus, and to the deep human consciousness to which these poets give utterance; but who can doubt that the Apostle had before his mind as the highest type of that Divine Sonship, Jesus, whom he preached in Athens? The revelation

of perfect God through the image of perfect man was the Apostle's message to the men of Athens. And it is the personality of the Divine man of Nazareth that has changed the face of the world. Account for it as we may, this manifestation of God in His Christ¹ has been the starting-point of fresh life, a new creation out of which has sprung the thousand renovating influences which are still at work in the bosom of humanity.

"It has been reserved for Christianity," says Mr. Lecky in his "*History of European Morals*," "to present the world an ideal character which, through all the changes of eighteen centuries, has filled the hearts of men with an impassioned love; has shown itself capable of acting on all ages, nations, temperaments and conditions; has not only been the highest pattern of virtue, but the highest incentive to its practice, and has exercised so deep an influence that it may be truly said that the simple record of three short years of active life has done more to regenerate and soften mankind than all the disquisitions of philosophers and all the exhortations of moralists. It has indeed been the wellspring of whatever is best and

¹ The marvellous spiritual greatness of Christ and the influence which has proceeded from it, are candidly acknowledged by such critics as Strauss ("*New Life of Jesus*," vol. i. pp. 223, 224, Eng. trans.) and Renan ("*Questions Contemporaines*," pp. 218, 232.).

purest in the Christian life. Amid all the sin and failings, amid all the priestcraft and persecutions, and fanaticism that have defaced the Church, it has preserved in the character and example of its Founder an enduring principle of regeneration."

The correspondence of that Divine life realised in humanity to all our deepest needs is an attestation to its power which survives all changes of thought and makes it invulnerable to criticism. To the poor, the illiterate, the weak, the men and women to whom this world has brought little save sorrow, the gospel of Christ has brought the spiritual elevation which has at once made sorrow endurable, and lifted the ideal of life. Culture as well as ignorance, when culture has been imbued with religion, and sometimes even when it has not, has bowed before Jesus Christ. The recognition of His transcendent spiritual greatness by minds of the most opposite order, and by characters of the most diverse kind, is proof how deeply this spiritual greatness has penetrated the heart of man. The devout Theodore Parker, and "the self-torturing sophist wild Rousseau"—all "fire and fickleness"—are at one in their estimation of the Christ.¹ Diderot, a scoffer in a scoffing age, was so impressed by the spell of the story of that Passion and Death that he

¹ Parker, "Discourse on Matters Pertaining to Religion," p. 242; Rousseau "Emile," liv. iv.

once flung a sudden silence over a brilliant Parisian assembly by openly avowing it.¹ Even Marat had the gospel always open on his table, and in the delirium of his dream of universal freedom called Jesus Christ his Master.² Goethe saw in the gospels "the reflection of a greatness which emanated from the person of Jesus, as of divine a kind as ever was seen upon earth . . . the divine manifestation of the highest principle of morality."³ John Stuart Mill, beneath whose cold intellect beat with suppressed force a consuming passion of emotion, kindles into enthusiasm as he speaks of that "unique figure, not more unlike all his precursors than all his followers," "a standard of excellence, and a model for imitation," which "is available even to the absolute unbeliever, and can never more be lost to humanity" who must be placed "in the very first rank of the men of sublime genius of whom our species can boast," and whose "pre-eminent genius" was "combined with the qualities of probably the greatest moral reformer and martyr to that mission who ever existed on earth."⁴ And from the far East comes the testimony of Keshub Chunder Sen to the "noble purpose of

¹ Hess apud Stier, "Words of the Lord," vii. 435 n., English trans.

² Lamartine, "History of the Girondists," ii. 444, English trans.

³ "Conversations with Eckermann," ii. 423 (Eng. tr.)

⁴ J. S. Mill, "Three Essays on Religion: Theism," pp. 253-255.

Christ's noble heart," and to "the vast moral influence of His life and death."¹

What, then, shall we say to confessions such as these? When men so widely sundered from each other—men with no traditional or conventional predilections in favour of Christian faith—thus think of the Christ, we at least, my brethren, may well believe that still God speaks to the world through a Son, that in this highest type of manhood we have the true symbol and the clear vision of the Divine nature. "Ye believe in God: ye believe also in Me." That awful Presence, whose voice we have never heard, whose shape we have never seen, dissolves as faith strives to grasp the skirts of His glory, blinds us with His intolerable splendour as we reach forth to touch "His throne of darkness in the abyss of light;" but the vision of the manhood of the Lord brings us back to possibilities of worship and of trust. Of all incredibilities the most incredible is that a soul like the soul of Jesus should have arisen in a soulless universe,—that a life such as His should have been possible in a world that has no God,—that a character like His should have no counterpart above,—or that the Spirit of heaven, earth, and sea, "the Power by

¹ Sen, "Lectures and Tracts," pp. 8, 9.

which planets gravitate and stars shine,"¹ should be less and lower than the Christ.

And this spiritual intuition of the God whose glory shines in the Christ carries with it a new spring of hope for ourselves. For faith in the unbroken continuity of the present and of the after-life is involved in faith in the Divine Sonship. So, indeed, felt St. Paul, as he reasoned in Athens with all who met with him. "He preached unto them Jesus and the resurrection,"—the continued life of all of which the heavenly life of Jesus was the sign and the pledge. The Athenians laughed when they heard him speak so earnestly on a subject which appeared to them, or at least to some of them, flatly incredible. In light, bantering vein they professed to believe that Jesus and Anastasis² were two foreign divinities, until the Apostle's discourse left no room for doubt that he was speaking of the immortal life, and of One who was dead and is alive for evermore. "When they heard of the resurrection of the dead some mocked; and others said, We will hear thee again of this matter." They never waited to ask what grounds the Apostle had for his belief that the spirit of man is changed only—not

¹ Herbert Spencer.

² Τὸν Ἰησοῦν καὶ τὴν Ἀνάστασιν (Resurrection), Acts xvii. 18. This view of Baur, Schaff, Renan, and others appears to me probable. On the other hand, see Meyer, "Apostelgeschichte," s. 312.

annihilated—by death, but dismissed the whole matter as simply unworthy of credence or of discussion.

And yet, in reality, this attitude of the Athenian towards the truth which Paul preached is not native to the heart of man, is reached only by the suppression through artificial culture of our deepest instincts, and is changed into another attitude by the revival of spiritual faiths. Such a revival Christianity was. The contrast between the light mockery of the Epicurean, or even between the graver and soberer doubt of the Stoic, and the earnestness and confidence of St. Paul, was due, in part, to his vision of his risen Lord—a fact, indeed, which rests upon his own testimony,¹ which testimony as such cannot be questioned except by questioning his honesty—but, above all, to that spiritual intuition of immortal love and of everlasting righteousness which his faith in Christ crucified inspired.²

And as it was with St. Paul so it is with ourselves. Closely entwined with that higher revelation of God which the Beloved Son was, is faith in immortality. Believe that the universe is not alive but dead—the home of no Infinite mind—the garment of no living

¹ 1 Cor. ix. 1; 1 Cor. xv. 1-8. "Die Auferstehung Christi ein Punkt ist, wo Geschichte und Dogma sich unmittelbar berühren."—Biedermann, "Christliche Dogmatik," S. 232.

² And he said, Nay, father Abraham: but if one went unto them from the dead, they will repent. And he said unto him, If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rose from the dead.—WORDS OF THE LORD (*Luke xvi. 30, 31*).

God—and it is easy enough to believe that consciousness is the mere temporary bubble on the eternal surge of things, flashing out for an instant on the surface only to

“ Drop from out this universal frame
Into that shapeless, scopeless, blank abyss,
That utter nothingness of which it came.”

Rise to faith in a living God such as prophet and psalmist held, and the dread that the grave cannot praise Him—that they who go down into the pit cannot hope for His truth, becomes a perplexity, an enigma, a dark shadow on the gladness of religion. Rise higher still—rise to Christ—look out through His eyes on a world clothed with the loveliness of God—catch some reflex of His deep God-consciousness, take into heart and into life some portion of His trust and love for the Father of all—stand in the shadow of His Cross—and then the dawn as of the Eastern morning is breaking upon the soul. That behind the closed gate of death all this might of love, all this consciousness of goodness, lives no more—that the history of the Christ and of souls that are Christ-like is shattered at last against a boundary wall of blank nothingness—this is of all beliefs the most unbelievable. The intuition of God is the deepest ground of faith in immortality.

For this faith in our survival of that temporary

crisis in our being which men call death is one that ought not to be dissevered from those other faiths which interlace themselves with it, and from which it cannot be torn without hurt and damage to itself and them. The belief in personal immortality as it finds its deepest ground in faith in God, so also is rooted in faith in His overruling providence and in His moral government. That judgment of the world in righteousness with which St. Paul's discourse ended is the end also of the world's history. Long before science demonstrated the unity of law and order Christianity disclosed the unity of human destinies. It is not too much to say that the idea of a moral unity in the world's history, an idea so characteristic of the post-Christian as compared with the pre-Christian ages, received its form and shape from Hebrew and Christian faith.¹ In pain and conflict and anguish and sin still is the world moving on to "one far-off Divine event." Its history is not made up of a series of incoherent phenomena which come and go like shadows in a dream. It is not a maze without a plan, with turnings and windings which lead to nothing, a round of motions without definite aim or issue, in which all efforts are plunges in the void, the idle beating of

¹Like most Christian ideas, this also was foreshadowed by Plato, but it was Christianity that made it an effective reality. See Baur, "Sokrates und Christus." *Einleitung: Abhandlungen*, S. 230, &c (Ed. Zeller, 1876).

the air. It is a Kingdom of God, a drama slowly evolving itself in national history, and in the story of our lives from year to year. And as science has opened up fresh vistas into the past, and created new forecasts for the future, as we look backward and as we look forward our sense of the breadth and length and depth and height of God's purpose is strengthened, though deeper than plummet ever sounded lies the mystery of His ways.

Members we are of this Divine Kingdom, each having his place, his function, and his work. And in the recognition of this fact the individual man finds the highest sanction of the sense of obligation by which he is impelled, finds the completest meaning of the responsibility under which he acts, and learns the deepest lesson of the sacredness of his work in the world. Above all the consciousness of what he owes to his fellows is the consciousness of what he owes to God. The certainty of a Divine judgment, passed every day upon his thoughts and acts, of a soul-searching light which penetrates to the darkest chambers of his heart, adds force to conscience, and makes it a power in action. The judgment of One who will sum up in righteousness the spirit and complexion of the whole life, whose decisions cannot be evaded, cannot be cheated, or defied, or mocked; the judgment of One who weaves into each man's destiny his moral deserts,

and will deal with each according to his deeds; the judgment of the Eternal One who claims us as His own, strengthens every true voice which pleads for goodness, and in hours of difficulty and of temptation makes sense of duty supreme. When "the Power Eternal, not ourselves, that makes for righteousness,"¹ is believed in, not as an abstraction, but as a Being, no ethical sanction which men have ever framed has worked in this world with so profound an influence.

Yes, God lays His hand upon us and we obey the mandates of His Will. But higher yet than to this law of conscience—finding its sanction and its strength in a supreme righteousness beyond and above itself—does Christian faith lift the soul that trusts and loves the God whose face has been unveiled in Christ's: for there is a region of Divine communion in which not obedience to mandate but power of heavenly sympathy reigns, in which God's Spirit touches ours, in which from contact with the God who is heart to heart with us, we feel ourselves not servants but sons. Here in the "ampler ether, the diviner air" of pure spiritual communion the soul learns its own kinship with God. Here the uplifted face of human trust gazes upwards to the Eternal Love. Beneath the Perfection which broods with heavenly wing over the sin

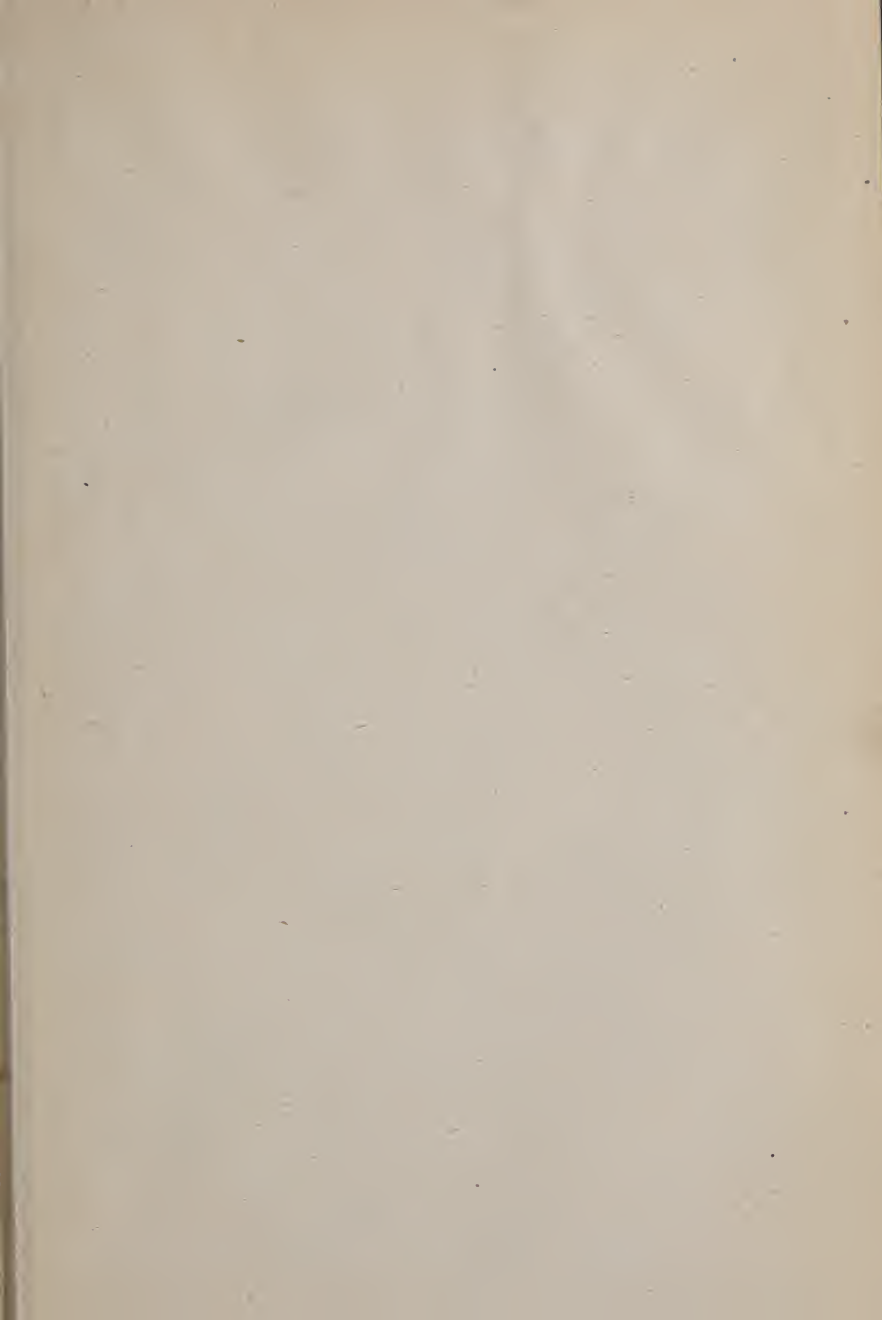
¹ Matthew Arnold.

and evil of our lives, we come with our conscious imperfection for healing and for rest. In the Everlasting Strength which stoops so gently to the child's helplessness we find our own strength, and in our weakness and in our consciousness of dependence the Divine support needed for our sorrows and for our work. As with the pleadings of our shame and of our feebleness, we ask for forgiveness, He gives His Holy Spirit to them that ask Him—the pardon which responds to penitence,—the sense of the ineffable love which breathes its peace into the heart and its light into the life. The aspiration, the worship, the prayers which rise from men and women to God are met by the answer of God's nature to our needs—by the response of His Spirit to ours. He "hath made of one blood all nations of men . . . that they should seek the Lord if haply they might feel after Him and find Him, though He be not far from every one of us; for in Him we live, and move, and have our being." "With Thee is the fountain of life; in Thy light shall we see light." The soul lifted by the inspiration of devotion to seek after God is but returning to its primal source, and springs upward to the region of Divine communion only because it is drawn upward by the Power from whom it came.

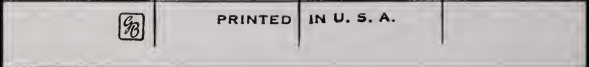
Between Uncreated Light and created mind is such communion as this possible? The experience of some

of the truest and holiest and sweetest souls that ever breathed on this earth say that it is. It is open to those who please to question its reality on the side of God; it cannot be questioned as matter of fact on the side of man. Those who have themselves thus held communion with God cannot doubt that it is a reality on the side of God too. And corresponding as it does with man's essentially religious nature, it is one attestation more of the Divine Source from which we came and to Whose bosom we are destined to return. The soul was made for God and God is its eternal home. In the spiritual experience of those who have risen to fellowship with the Father of spirits, faith finds its verification, verification of another order than that which intelligence discovers in the region of sense, but in its own order, not less real, nay, in ultimate issues, the source of the profoundest consciousness of reality. For under all the changing conceptions of the system of things in which our lot is cast and through which our higher destinies are worked out, the unchanging light carries its own witness to the soul, and prepares it afar off for the eternal righteousness and kingdom.



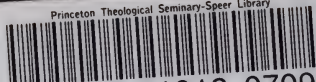


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